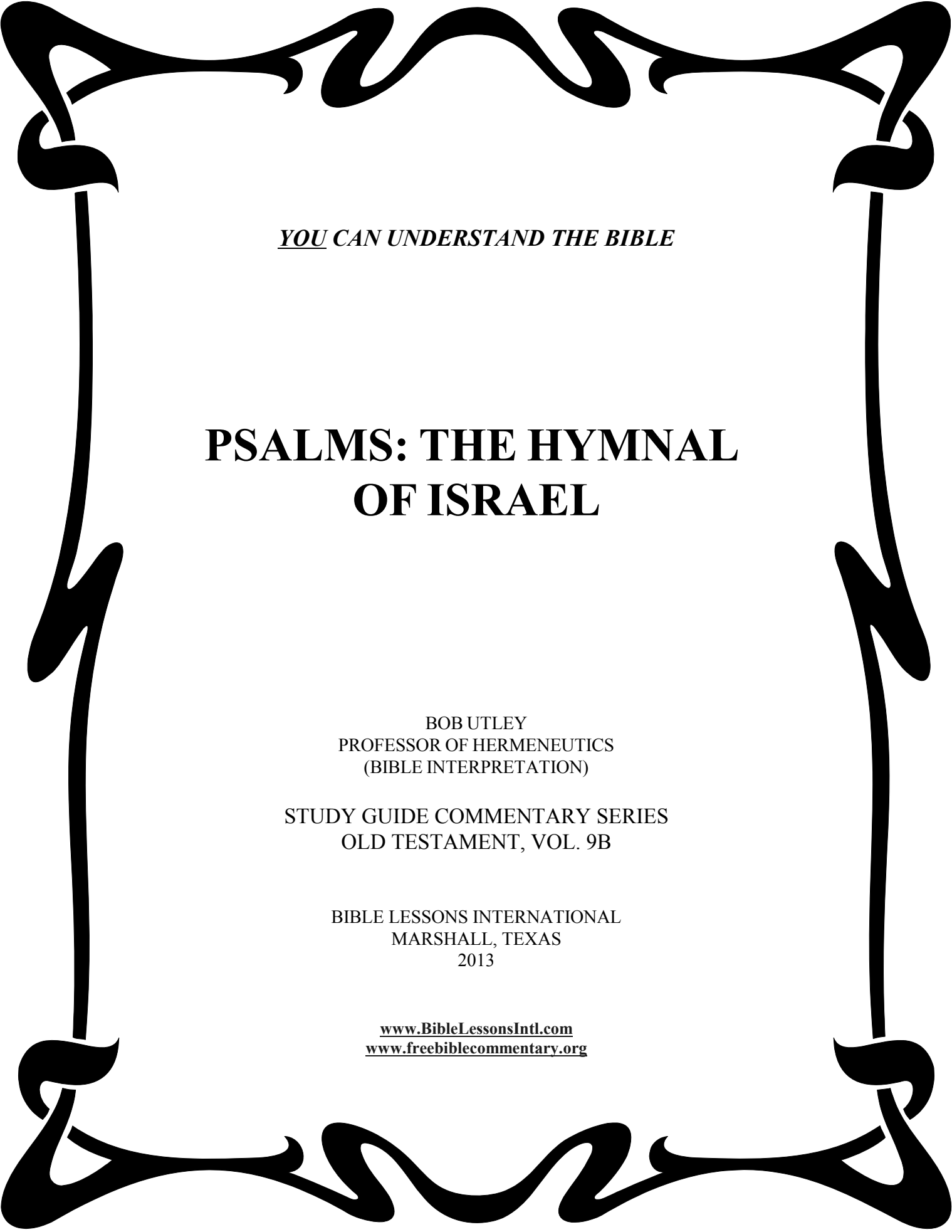




YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

PSALMS: THE HYMNAL OF ISRAEL

BOB UTLEY
PROFESSOR OF HERMENEUTICS
(BIBLE INTERPRETATION)

STUDY GUIDE COMMENTARY SERIES
OLD TESTAMENT, VOL. 9B

BIBLE LESSONS INTERNATIONAL
MARSHALL, TEXAS
2013

www.BibleLessonsIntl.com
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Brief Explanations of the Technical Resources Used in this Old Testament Commentary Series

I. Lexical

There are several excellent lexicons available for ancient Hebrew.

- A. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. It is based on the German lexicon by William Gesenius. It is known by the abbreviation BDB.
- B. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, translated by M. E. J. Richardson. It is known by the abbreviation KB.
- C. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by William L. Holladay and is based on the above German lexicon.
- D. A new five volume theological word study entitled *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. Van Gemeren. It is known by the abbreviation NIDOTTE.

Where there is significant lexical variety, I have shown several English translations (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB) from both “word-for-word” and “dynamic equivalent” translations (cf. Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 28-44).

II. Grammatical

The grammatical identification is usually based on John Joseph Owens’ *Analytical Key to the Old Testament* in four volumes. This is cross checked with Benjamin Davidson’s *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

Another helpful resource for grammatical and syntactical features which is used in most of the OT volumes of “You Can Understand the Bible” Series is “The Helps for Translators Series” from the United Bible Societies. They are entitled “A Handbook on _____.”

III. Textual

I am committed to the inspiration of the consonantal Hebrew text (not the Masoretic vowel points and comments). As in all hand-copied, ancient texts, there are some questionable passages. This is usually because of the following:

- A. *hapax legomenon* (words used only once in the Hebrew OT)
- B. idiomatic terms (words and phrases whose literal meanings are not applicable)
- C. historical uncertainties (our lack of information about the ancient world)
- D. the poly-Semitic semantic field of Hebrew’s limited vocabulary
- E. problems associated with later scribes hand-copying ancient Hebrew texts
- F. Hebrew scribes trained in Egypt who felt free to update the texts they copied to make them complete and understandable to their day (NIDOTTE, pp. 52-54).

There are several sources of Hebrew words and texts outside the Masoretic textual tradition.

- 1. The Samaritan Pentateuch
 - 2. The Dead Sea Scrolls
 - 3. The Nash papyrus (Decalog)
 - 4. The Severus scroll (Pentateuch)
 - 5. Some later coins, letters, and ostraca (broken pieces of unfired pottery used for writing)
- But for the most part, there are no manuscript families in the OT like those in the Greek NT manuscripts. For a good brief article on the textual reliability of the Masoretic Text (A.D.

900's) see "The Reliability of the Old Testament Text" by Bruce K. Waltke in the NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 51-67.

The Hebrew text used is *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) from the German Bible Society, 1997, which is based on the Leningrad Codex (A.D. 1009). Occasionally, the ancient versions (Greek Septuagint, Aramaic Targums, Syriac Peshitta, and Latin Vulgate) are consulted if the Hebrew is ambiguous or obviously confused.

BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF HEBREW VERBAL FORMS WHICH IMPACT EXEGESIS

I. Brief Historical Development of Hebrew

Hebrew is part of the Shemitic (Semitic) family of languages. The name (given by modern scholars) comes from Noah's son, Shem (cf. Gen. 5:32; 6:10). Shem's descendants are listed in Gen. 10:21-31 as Arabs, Hebrews, Syrians, Arameans, and Assyrians. In reality some Semitic languages are used by nations listed in Ham's line (cf. Gen. 10:6-14), Canaan, Phoenicia, and Ethiopia.

Hebrew is part of the northwest group of these Semitic languages. Modern scholars have samples of this ancient language group from

- A. Amorite (*Mari Tablets* from 18th century B.C. in Akkadian)
- B. Canaanite (*Ras Shamra Tablets* from 15th century B.C. in Ugaritic)
- C. Canaanite (*Amarna Letters* from 14th century B.C. in Canaanite Akkadian)
- D. Phoenician (Hebrew uses Phoenician alphabet)
- E. Moabite (Mesha stone, 840 B.C.)
- F. Aramaic (official language of the Persian Empire used in Gen. 31:47 [2 words]; Jer. 10:11; Dan. 2:4-6; 7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26 and spoken by Jews in the first century in Palestine)
The Hebrew language is called "the lip of Canaan" in Isa. 19:18. It was first called "Hebrew" in the prologue of Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Ben Sirach) about 180 B.C. (and some other early places, cf. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, pp. 205ff). It is most closely related to Moabite and the language used at Ugarit. Examples of ancient Hebrew found outside the Bible are
 1. the Gezer calendar, 925 B.C. (a school boy's writing)
 2. the Siloam Inscription, 705 B.C. (tunnel writings)
 3. Samaritan Ostraca, 770 B.C. (tax records on broken pottery)
 4. Lachish letters, 587 B.C. (war communications)
 5. Maccabean coins and seals
 6. some Dead Sea Scroll texts
 7. numerous inscriptions (cf. "Languages [Hebrew]," ABD 4:203ff)

It, like all Semitic languages, is characterized by words made up of three consonants (tri-consonantal root). It is an inflexed language. The three-root consonants carry the basic word meaning, while prefixed, suffixed, or internal additions show the syntactical function (later vowels, cf. Sue Green, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 46-49).

Hebrew vocabulary demonstrates a difference between prose and poetry. Word meanings are connected to folk etymologies (not linguistic origins). Word plays and sound plays are very common (*paronomasia*).

II. Aspects of Predication

A. VERBS

The normal expected word order is VERB, PRONOUN, SUBJECT (with modifiers), OBJECT (with modifiers). The basic non-flagged VERB is the *Qal*, PERFECT, MASCULINE, SINGULAR form. It is how Hebrew and Aramaic lexicons are arranged.

VERBS are inflected to show

1. number—SINGULAR, PLURAL, DUAL
2. gender—MASCULINE and FEMININE (no NEUTER)
3. mood—INDICATIVE, SUBJUNCTIVE, IMPERATIVE (relation of the action to reality)
4. tense (aspect)

- a. PERFECT, which denotes completion, in the sense of the beginning, continuing, and concluding of an action. Usually this form was used of past action, the thing has occurred. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says

“The single whole described by a perfect is also considered as certain. An imperfect may picture a state as possible or desired or expected, but a perfect sees it as actual, real, and sure” (p. 36).

S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, describes it this way:

“The perfect is employed to indicate actions the accomplishment of which lies indeed in the future, but is regarded as dependant upon such an unalterable determination of the will that it may be spoken of as having actually taken place: thus a resolution, promise, or decree, especially of Divine one, is frequently announced in the perfect tense” (p. 17, e.g., the prophetic perfect).

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, defines this verbal form as one which

“views a situation from the outside, as a whole. As such it expresses a simple fact, whether it be an action or state (including state of being or mind). When used of actions, it often views the action as complete from the rhetorical standpoint of the speaker or narrator (whether it is or is not complete in fact or reality is not the point). The perfect can pertain to an action/state in the past, present or future. As noted above, time frame, which influences how one translates the perfect into a tense-oriented language like English, must be determined from the context” (p. 86).

- b. IMPERFECT, which denotes an action in progress (incomplete, repetitive, continual, or contingent), often movement toward a goal. Usually this form was used of Present and Future action.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says

“All IMPERFECTS represent incomplete states. They are either repeated or developing or contingent. In other words, or partially developed, or partially assured. In all cases they are partial in some sense, i.e., incomplete” (p. 55).

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, says

“It is difficult to reduce the essence of the imperfect to a single concept, for it encompasses both aspect and mood. Sometimes the imperfect is used in an indicative manner and makes an objective statement. At other times it views an action more subjectively, as hypothetical, contingent, possible, and so on” (p. 89).

- c. The added *waw*, which links the VERB to the action of the previous VERB(s).
 - d. IMPERATIVE, which is based on the volition of the speaker and potential action by the hearer.
 - e. In ancient Hebrew only the larger context can determine the authorial-intended time orientations.
- B. The seven major inflected forms and their basic meaning. In reality these forms work in conjunction with each other in a context and must not be isolated.
1. *Qal* (*Kal*), the most common and basic of all the forms. It denotes simple action or a state of being. There is no causation or specification implied.
 2. *Niphal*, the second most common form. It is usually PASSIVE, but this form also functions as reciprocal and reflexive. It also has no causation or specification implied.
 3. *Piel*, this form is active and expresses the bringing about of an action into a state of being. The basic meaning of the *Qal* stem is developed or extended into a state of being.
 4. *Pual*, this is the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Piel*. It is often expressed by a PARTICIPLE.
 5. *Hithpael*, which is the reflexive or reciprocal stem. It expresses iterative or durative action to the *Piel* stem. The rare PASSIVE form is called *Hothpael*.
 6. *Hiphil*, the active form of the causative stem in contrast to *Piel*. It can have a permissive aspect, but usually refers to the cause of an event. Ernst Jenni, a German Hebrew grammarian, believed that the *Piel* denoted something coming into a state of being, while *Hiphil* showed how it happened.
 7. *Hophal*, the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Hiphil*. These last two stems are the least used of the seven stems.

Much of this information comes from *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, by Bruce K. Walke and M. O'Connor, pp. 343-452.

Agency and causation chart. One key in understanding the Hebrew VERB system is to see it as a pattern of VOICE relationships. Some stems are in contrast to other stems (i.e., *Qal* - *Niphal*; *Piel* - *Hiphil*)

The chart below tries to visualize the basic function of the VERB stems as to causation.

Voice or Subject	No Secondary Agency	An Active Secondary Agency	A Passive Secondary Agency
ACTIVE	<i>Qal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Piel</i>
MIDDLE PASSIVE	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hophal</i>	<i>Pual</i>
REFLEXIVE/ RECIPROCAL	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Hithpael</i>

This chart is taken from the excellent discussion of the VERBAL system in light of new Akkadian research (cf. Bruce K. Waltke, M. O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp. 354-359).

R. H. Kennett, *A Short Account of the Hebrew Tenses*, has provided a needed warning.

"I have commonly found in teaching, that a student's chief difficulty in the Hebrew verbs is to grasp the meaning which they conveyed to the minds of the Hebrews themselves; that is to say, there is a tendency to assign as equivalents to each of the Hebrew Tenses a certain number of Latin or English forms by which that

particular Tense may commonly be translated. The result is a failure to perceive many of these fine shades of meaning, which give such life and vigor to the language of the Old Testament.

The difficulty in the use of the Hebrew verbs lies solely in the point of view, so absolutely different from our own, from which the Hebrews regarded an action; the *time*, which with us is the first consideration, as the very word, ‘tense’ shows, being to them a matter of secondary importance. It is, therefore, essential that a student should clearly grasp, not so much the Latin or English forms which may be used in translating each of the Hebrew Tenses, but rather the aspect of each action, as it presented itself to a Hebrew’s mind.

The name ‘tenses’ as applied to Hebrew verbs is misleading. The so-called Hebrew ‘tenses’ do not express the *time* but merely the *state* of an action. Indeed were it not for the confusion that would arise through the application of the term ‘state’ to both nouns and verbs, ‘states’ would be a far better designation than ‘tenses.’ It must always be borne in mind that it is impossible to translate a Hebrew verb into English without employing a limitation (of time), which is entirely absent in the Hebrew. The ancient Hebrews never thought of an action as past, present, or future, but simply as *perfect*, i.e., complete, or *imperfect*, i.e., as in course of development. When we say that a certain Hebrew tense corresponds to a Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future in English, we do not mean that the Hebrews thought of it as Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future, but merely that it must be so translated in English. The *time* of an action the Hebrews did not attempt to express by any verbal form” (preface and p. 1).

For a second good warning, Sue Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, reminds us,

“There is no way of knowing whether modern scholars’ reconstruction of semantic fields and sense relations in an ancient dead language are merely a reflection of their own intuition, or their own native language, or whether those fields existed in Classical Hebrew” (p. 128).

C. MOODS (Modes)

1. It happened, is happening (INDICATIVE), usually uses PERFECT tense or PARTICIPLES (all PARTICIPLES are INDICATIVE).
2. It will happen, could happen (SUBJUNCTIVE)
 - a. uses a marked IMPERFECT tense
 - (1) COHORTATIVE (added h), FIRST PERSON IMPERFECT form which normally expresses a wish, a request, or self-encouragement (i.e., actions willed by the speaker)
 - (2) JUSSIVE (internal changes), THIRD PERSON IMPERFECT (can be second person in negated sentences) which normally expresses a request, a permission, an admonition, or advice
 - b. uses a PERFECT tense with *lu* or *lule*
These constructions are similar to SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences in Koine Greek. A false statement (protasis) results in a false conclusion (apodosis).
 - c. uses an IMPERFECT tense and *lu*
Context and *lu*, as well as a future orientation, mark this SUBJUNCTIVE usage. Some examples from J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* are Gen. 13:16; Deut. 1:12; 1 Kgs. 13:8; Ps. 24:3; Isa. 1:18 (cf. Pp. 76-77).

- D. *Waw* – Conversive/consecutive/relative. This uniquely Hebrew (Canaanite) syntactical feature has caused great confusion through the years. It is used in a variety of ways often based on genre.

The reason for the confusion is that early scholars were European and tried to interpret in light of their own native languages. When this proved difficult they blamed the problem on Hebrew being a “supposed” ancient, archaic language. European languages are TENSE (time) based VERBS. Some of the variety and grammatical implications were specified by the letter WAW being added to the PERFECT or IMPERFECT VERB stems. This altered the way the action was viewed.

1. In historical narrative the VERBS are linked together in a chain with a standard pattern.
2. The *waw* prefix showed a specific relationship with the previous VERB(s).
3. The larger context is always the key to understanding the VERB chain. Semitic VERBS cannot be analyzed in isolation.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, notes the distinctive of Hebrew in its use of the *waw* before PERFECTS and IMPERFECTS (pp. 52-53). As the basic idea of the PERFECT is past, the addition of *waw* often projects it into a future time aspect. This is also true of the IMPERFECT whose basic idea is present or future; the addition of *waw* places it into the past. It is this unusual time shift which explains the *waw*’s addition, not a change in the basic meaning of the tense itself. The *waw* PERFECTS work well with prophecy, while the *waw* IMPERFECTS work well with narratives (pp. 54, 68).

Watts continues his definition

“As a fundamental distinction between *waw* conjunctive and *waw* consecutive, the following interpretations are offered:

1. *Waw* conjunctive appears always to indicate a parallel.
2. *Waw* consecutive appears always to indicate a sequence. It is the only form of *waw* used with consecutive imperfects. The relation between the imperfects linked by it may be temporal sequence, logical consequence, logical cause, or logical contrast. In all cases there is a sequence” (p. 103).

E. INFINITIVE – There are two kinds of INFINITIVES

1. INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES, which are “strong, independent, striking expressions used for dramatic effect. . . as a subject, it often has no written verb, the verb ‘to be’ being understood, of course, but the word standing dramatically alone” J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*” (p. 92).
2. INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, which are “related grammatically to the sentence by PREPOSITIONS, POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS, and the CONSTRUCT relationship” (p. 91).

J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, describes the CONSTRUCT state as:

“When two (or more) words are so closely united that together they constitute one compound idea, the dependent word (or words) is (are) said to be in the construct state” (p. 44).

F. INTERROGATIVES

1. They always appear first in the sentence.
2. Interpretive significance
 - a. *ha* – does not expect a response
 - b. *halo*’ – the author expects a “yes” answer

NEGATIVES

1. They always appear before the words they negate.
2. Most common negation is *lo*’.
3. The term *’al* has a contingent connotation and is used with COHORTATIVES and JUSSIVES.

4. The term *lebhilit*, meaning “in order that. . .not,” is used with INFINITIVES.
5. The term *'en* is used with PARTICIPLES.

G. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

1. There are four kinds of conditional sentences which basically are paralleled in Koine Greek.
 - a. something assumed to be happening or thought of as fulfilled (FIRST CLASS in Greek)
 - b. something contrary to fact whose fulfillment is impossible (SECOND CLASS)
 - c. something which is possible or even probable (THIRD CLASS)
 - d. something which is less probable; therefore, the fulfillment is dubious (FOURTH CLASS)
2. GRAMMATICAL MARKERS
 - a. the assumed to be true or real condition always uses an INDICATIVE PERFECT or PARTICIPLE and usually the protasis is introduced by
 - (1) *'im*
 - (2) *ki* (or *'asher*)
 - (3) *hin* or *hinneh*
 - b. the contrary to fact condition always uses a PERFECT aspect VERB or a PARTICIPLE with the introductory PARTICIPLE *lu* or *lule*
 - c. the more probable condition always used IMPERFECT VERB or PARTICIPLES in the protasis, usually *'im* or *ki* are used as introductory PARTICLES
 - d. the less probable condition uses IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVES in the protasis and always uses *'im* as an introductory PARTICLE

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	Anchor Bible Commentaries, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	Analytical Key to the Old Testament by John Joseph Owens
ANE	Ancient Near East
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts by James B. Pritchard
BDB	A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, GBS, 1997
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (the Peshitta) by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	A New Translation of the Bible by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible

NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
OTPG	Old Testament Parsing Guide by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks, and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Robert Young
ZPBE	Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession, and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal, cultural, or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us attempt to overcome our biases.

First Principle

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship (or when it was edited). The original author had a purpose and a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal, or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide a brief introduction to each book of the Bible.

Second Principle

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase, or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing the paragraphing of modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

- A. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
- B. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a midpoint between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
- C. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the original text.
- D. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
- E. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

Third Principle

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

Fourth Principle

The fourth principle is to note the literary genre. Original inspired authors chose to record their messages in different forms (e.g., historical narrative, historical drama, poetry, prophecy, gospel [parable], letter, apocalyptic). These different forms have special keys to interpretation (see Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, or Robert Stein, *Playing by the Rules*).

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley
East Texas Baptist University
June 27, 1996

A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness?

This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had (1) brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture (post-modernity); (2) the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems (world religions); and (3) denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

I. Presuppositions

- A. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author (the Spirit) through a human writer in a specific historical setting.

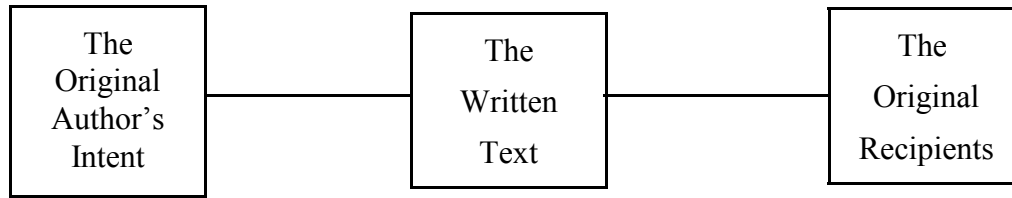
- B. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
- C. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
- D. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
 - 1. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
 - 2. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
 - 3. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
 - 4. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
 - 5. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
 - 6. the words chosen to present the message
 - 7. parallel passages

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

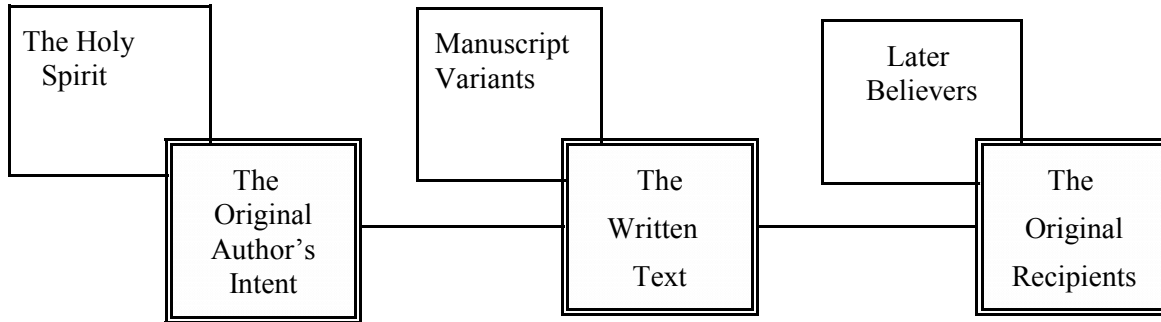
II. Inappropriate Methods

- A. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
- B. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
- C. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
- D. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
- E. Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker's authority. This is often referred to as "reader response" ("what-the-text-means-to-me" interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components, but to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) “reader response” interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications, but how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan and *Cracking Old Testament Codes* by D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., published by Broadman and Holman.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text, and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: “The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries.” This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Three areas provide at least limited verification:

1. the original author's
 - a. historical setting
 - b. literary context

2. the original author's choice of
 - a. grammatical structures (syntax)
 - b. contemporary word usage
 - c. genre
3. our understanding of appropriate
 - a. relevant parallel passages
 - b. relationship between doctrines (paradox)

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. It is self-defeating to claim inspiration for the Bible and then for believers not to be able to agree on what it teaches and requires!

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

- A. The first reading cycle
 1. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)-
 2. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
 3. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
 4. Identify the predominant literary genre
 - a. Old Testament
 - (1) Hebrew narrative
 - (2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
 - (3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
 - (4) Law codes
 - b. New Testament
 - (1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
 - (2) Parables (Gospels)
 - (3) Letters/epistles
 - (4) Apocalyptic literature
- B. The second reading cycle
 1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
 2. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
 3. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
- C. The third reading cycle
 1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
 2. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
 - a. the author
 - b. the date
 - c. the recipients
 - d. the specific reason for writing
 - e. aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
 - f. references to historical people and events

3. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
4. Check your historical setting by using study aids.

D. The fourth reading cycle

1. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
2. Look for literary or grammatical structures
 - a. repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
 - b. repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
 - c. contrasting concepts
3. List the following items
 - a. significant terms
 - b. unusual terms
 - c. important grammatical structures
 - d. particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
4. Look for relevant parallel passages
 - a. look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
 - (1) "systematic theology" books
 - (2) reference Bibles
 - (3) concordances
 - b. Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
 - c. Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
5. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
 - a. study Bibles
 - b. Bible encyclopaedias, handbooks, and dictionaries
 - c. Bible introductions
 - d. Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

IV. Application of Bible interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

But illumination is not inspiration. To say “thus saith the Lord,” we must abide by the original author’s intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, “our” principles—not the text’s principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients’ needs but must be related to the original author’s meaning.

V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical and textual process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

- A. Pray for the Spirit’s help (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- B. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. 1 John 1:9).
- C. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
- D. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
- E. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

- A. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:

“The illumination comes to the minds of God’s people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God’s true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture.”

- B. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:

According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. “To read the Bible *as God’s word* one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God’s Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God.”

- C. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:

“No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than

intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books.”

VI. This Commentary’s Method

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

- A. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done “reading cycle #3” check this information.
- B. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
- C. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:

- 1. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
- 2. The New King James Version (NKJV)
- 3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
- 4. Today’s English Version (TEV)
- 5. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyse the supposed structure of the original author’s thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called “the topic sentence” or “the central idea of the text.” This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

- D. Bob’s notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author’s thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
 - 1. literary context
 - 2. historical, cultural insights
 - 3. grammatical information
 - 4. word studies
 - 5. relevant parallel passages
- E. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
 - 1. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the “Textus Receptus.”
 - 2. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
 - 3. The Today’s English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.

4. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
- F. For those who do not read the original languages, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
1. manuscript variations
 2. alternate word meanings
 3. grammatically difficult texts and structure
 4. ambiguous texts
- Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
- G. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

INTRODUCTION TO HEBREW POETRY

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This type of literature makes up 1/3 of the Old Testament. It is especially common in the “Prophets” (all but Haggai and Malachi contain poetry) and “Writings” sections of the Hebrew canon.
- B. It is very different from English poetry. English poetry is developed from Greek and Latin poetry, which is primarily sound-based. Hebrew poetry has much in common with Canaanite poetry. There are no accented lines or rhyme in Near East poetry (but there is a beat).
- C. The archaeological discovery north of Israel at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) has helped scholars understand OT poetry. This poetry from the 15th century B.C. has obvious literary connections with biblical poetry.

II. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POETRY

- A. It is very compact.
- B. It tries to express truth, feelings or experiences in imagery.
- C. It is primarily written, not oral. It is highly structured. This structure is expressed in
 - 1. balanced lines (parallelism)
 - 2. word plays
 - 3. sound plays

III. THE STRUCTURE (R. K. Harrison, *Introduction To The Old Testament*, pp. 965-975)

- A. Bishop Robert Lowth in his book, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753) was the first to characterize biblical poetry as balanced lines of thought. Most modern English translations are formatted to show the lines of poetry.
 - 1. synonymous – the lines express the same thought in different words:
 - a. Psalm 3:1; 49:1; 83:14; 103:13
 - b. Proverbs 19:5; 20:1
 - c. Isaiah 1:3,10
 - d. Amos 5:24; 8:10
 - 2. antithetical – the lines express opposite thoughts by means of contrast or stating the positive and the negative:
 - a. Psalm 1:6; 90:6
 - b. Proverbs 1:29; 10:1,12; 15:1; 19:4
 - 3. synthetic – the next two or three lines develop the thought - Ps. 1:1-2; 19:7-9; 29:1-2
 - 4. chiasmic – a pattern of poetry expressing the message in a descending and ascending order. The main point is found in the middle of the pattern.
- B. A. Briggs in his book, *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture* (1899) developed the next stage of analysis of Hebrew poetry:
 - 1. emblematic – one clause literal and the second metaphorical, Ps. 42:1; 103:3.

2. climacteric or stair-like – the clauses reveal truth in an ascending fashion, Ps. 19:7-14; 29:1-2; 103:20-22.
 3. introverted – a series of clauses, usually at least four, is related by the internal structure of line 1 to 4 and 2 to 3, Ps. 30:8-10a
- C. G. B. Gray in his book, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (1915) developed the concept of balanced clauses further by:
1. complete balance — where every word in line one is repeated or balanced by a word in line two — Ps. 83:14 and Isa. 1:3
 2. incomplete balance where the clauses are not the same length, Ps. 59:16; 75:6
- D. Today there is a growing recognition of literary structural pattern in Hebrew called a chiasm, which denotes an odd number of parallel lines forming an hourglass shape whereby the central line is emphasized.
- E. Type of sound patterns found in poetry in general, but not often in eastern poetry
1. play on alphabet (acrostic, cf. Psalm 9; 34; 37; 119; Pro. 31:10ff; Lamentations 1-4)
 2. play on consonants (alliteration, cf. Ps. 6:8; 27:7; 122:6; Isa. 1:18-26)
 3. play on vowels (assonance, cf. Gen. 49:17; Exod. 14:14; Ezek. 27:27)
 4. play on repetition of similar sounding words with different meanings (paronomasia)
 5. play on words which, when pronounced, sound like the thing they name (onomatopoeia)
 6. special opening and closing (inclusive)
- F. There are several types of poetry in the Old Testament. Some are topic related and some are form related:
1. dedication songs – Num. 21:17-18
 2. work songs – (alluded to but not recorded in Jdgs. 9:27); Isa. 16:10; Jer. 25:30; 48:33
 3. ballads – Num. 21:27-30; Isa. 23:16
 4. drinking songs – negative, Isa. 5:11-13; Amos 6:4-7 and positive, Isa. 22:13
 5. love poems – Song of Songs, wedding riddle – Jdgs. 14:10-18, wedding song – Psalm 45
 6. laments/dirges – (alluded to but not recorded in 2 Sam. 1:17 and 2 Chr. 35:25; 2 Sam. 3:33; Psalm 27; 28; Jer. 9:17-22; Lamentations; Ezek. 19:1-14; 26:17-18; Nah. 3:15-19)
 7. war songs – Gen. 4:23-24; Exod. 15:1-18,20; Num. 10:35-36; 21:14-15; Jos. 10:13; Jdgs. 5:1-31; 11:34; 1 Sam. 18:6; 2 Sam. 1:18; Isa. 47:1-15; 37:21
 8. special benedictions or blessing of leader – Genesis 49; Num. 6:24-26; Deuteronomy 32; 2 Sam. 23:1-7
 9. magical texts – Balaam, Num. 24:3-9
 10. sacred poems – Psalms
 11. acrostic poems – Psalm 9; 34; 37; 119; Pro. 31:10ff and Lamentations 1-4
 12. curses – Num. 21:22-30
 13. taunt poems – Isa. 14:1-22; 47:1-15; Ezek. 28:1-23
 14. a book of war poems (Jashar) – Num. 21:14-15; Jos. 10:12-13; 2 Sam. 1:18

IV. GUIDELINE TO INTERPRETING HEBREW POETRY

- A. Look for the central truth of the stanza or strophe (this is like a paragraph in prose.) The RSV was the first modern translation to identify poetry by stanzas. Compare modern translations for helpful insights.

- B. Identify the figurative language and express it in prose. Remember, this type of literature is very compact, much is left for the reader to fill in.
- C. Be sure to relate the longer issue-oriented poems to their literary context (often the whole book) and historical setting.
- D. Attempt to identify the type of parallelism involved, whether synonymous, antithetical, or synthetic. This is very important.

Judges 4 and 5 are very helpful in seeing how poetry expresses history. Judges 4 is prose and Judges 5 is poetry of the same event (also compare Exodus 14 & 15).

INTRODUCTION TO THE PSALMS*

*Much of this material comes from R. K. Harrison's *An Introduction To the Old Testament*, pp. 976-1003 and LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, pp 510-532.

I. NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. In Hebrew the title is “Songs of Praise” or Praises” (*Tehillim*, cf. Psalm 145). This is surprising because so many of the psalms are laments or complaints.
- B. In the Septuagint (LXX) the title is *psalmos* which means “to pluck.” This Greek term is used of the Psalms in Luke 20:42; 24:44 and Acts 1:20. Not all the psalms were meant to be sung with musical accompaniment, but this came to be the title of the whole book in the LXX.

II. CANONIZATION

- A. Psalms is part of the third division of the Hebrew canon called the “Writings” (Kethubhim, Hagiographa). This section of the Hebrew canon was made up of:
 - 1. wisdom literature
 - a. Job
 - b. Psalms
 - c. Proverbs
 - 2. festival books (*Megilloth*)
 - a. Ruth
 - b. Ecclesiastes
 - c. Song of Songs
 - d. Lamentations
 - e. Esther
 - 3. historical books
 - a. Daniel
 - b. Ezra
 - c. Nehemiah
 - d. Chronicles
- B. The Psalms are quoted more often in the NT than any other OT book.

III. GENRE

- A. This literary form was common to the Ancient Near East. The biblical psalms share the form of hymns from Babylon, Egypt, and Canaan. Scholars have seen a close connection:
 - 1. between Psalm 104:20-30 and the Egyptian Hymn to *Aton* (14th century B.C.)
 - 2. Psalm 29 is almost identical to a Ugaritic poem to *Ba'al*, except for the name of the deity.
- B. The archaeological discovery of the Ras Shamra texts from the city of Ugarit show the similarity between Canaanite poetry and the Psalms. The discovery has helped to understand the form and vocabulary of the Psalter (see *The Anchor Bible*, 3 volumes, by Mitchell).

- C. The literary form was an ancient genre within Israel:
 1. the song of Moses, Exod. 15:1-17
 2. the song of Miriam, Exod. 15:21
 3. a song of Israel, Num. 21:17-18
 4. the song of Deborah, Judges 5
 5. the song of Hannah, I Sam. 2:1-10
 6. the song of the bow from the book of Jashar, 2 Sam. 1:17-27
- D. Three principle forms:
 1. praise psalms – characterized by starting with an IMPERATIVE such as “praise the Lord,” “sing unto the Lord,” etc.
 2. lament psalms – characterized by starting with a VOCATIVE such as “O Lord,” followed by a complaint or petition
 3. wisdom psalms – similar to categories of wisdom literature (i.e., how to live happy, successful, godly lives)

IV. AUTHORSHIP

- A. The traditional authorship of many of the Psalms is given in titles or superscriptions, which are present in all but thirty-four Psalms. There are two ways to view these titles:
 1. They are part of the Masoretic Hebrew text and present in the Septuagint (though often differing), therefore, canonical. However, the Psalms found in the Dead Sea Scrolls do not have these titles and superscriptions.
 2. They are not original with the inspired authors and should be viewed as ancient traditions, not inspired truths. It seems that at least two of them disagree with other canonical texts:
 - a. Psalm 34's title vs. 1 Sam. 21:10ff (the name of the Philistine king)
 - b. Psalm 56's title vs. 1 Sam. 21:10 (how did David get to Gath)
 - c. Psalm 60's superscriptions show the difficulty of relating to 2 Sam. 8:13 and 1 Chr. 18:12 in the number of enemies killed by whom.
 3. Another problem is that the Hebrew preposition “of” can be understood in several ways:
 - a. “written by”
 - b. “written for”
 - c. “written to”
 - d. “belonging to the time of”
 - e. “under the direction of”
 4. I think they are not inspired. I will not comment on them in this commentary.
- B. The Masoretic Hebrew Text's title designation of authors:
 1. David, (1 Samuel 16:16-18), (MT) author of 73 psalms; (LXX) author of 84 psalms; (Vulgate) author of 53 psalms
 2. Anonymous – 50 psalms: 1,2,10,33,43,71,91, 93-97,104-107,118-119,135,137,146-150
 3. Asaph, David's choir leader (1 Chr. 15:16-17; 16:5, “the sons of Asaph” are mentioned in Neh. 7:44) 12 psalms: 50, 73-83
 4. Sons of Korah, a family of Levitical musicians (1 Chr. 9:19; 15:17) 11 psalms: 42-49 except 43; 84-88 except 86
 5. Jeduthun, Levitical choir leader, (1 Chr. 16:41-42; 25:1-3; 2 Chr. 5:12) 3 psalms: 39; 62; 77
 6. Solomon, 2 psalms: 72; 127, “written by,” “written for,” “written to,” “belonging to,” “in the time of,” or “under direction of”

7. Moses, 1 psalm: 90
 8. The Ezrahite (1 Chr. 6:33; 15:17)
 - a. Ethan, Psalm 89 (some think Abraham) 1 Chr. 15:17,19
 - b. Heman, Psalm 88 (also a son of Korah) 1 Kgs. 4:31; 1 Chr. 4:31; 15:19
- C. Traditions of Authorship from Jewish Writings:
1. *Baba Bathra* 14b (Talmud) – “David wrote the book of Psalms with the help of ten elders, with the help of Adam, the first, and Melchizedek and Abraham and Moses and Heman and Jeduthun and Asaph and the three sons of Korah”
 2. *Sanhedrin* 38b (Talmud) attributes Psalm 139 to Adam and Psalm 110 to Melchizedek
- D. The Septuagint attributes Psalms to Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah (112; 126; 127; 137; 146-149).

V. DATE

- A. The dating of the Psalms is difficult for several reasons:
1. the individual psalms have a particular occasion that caused them to be written
 2. at some point the words of one psalmist became the words of the community of faith
 3. the psalms were collected through an editorial process into five books
- B. The Psalms include poems from all periods of Israel’s life:
1. Jewish tradition says:
 - a. Adam wrote Psalm 139
 - b. Melchizedek wrote Psalm 110
 - c. Abraham wrote Psalm 89
 - d. Moses wrote Psalm 90
 2. Modern scholarship has divided the Psalms into three major periods:
 - a. pre-exilic (books, I, II, & IV)
 - b. exilic (book III)
 - c. post-exilic (book V)
- C. It is obvious that many of the Psalms are attributed to David:
1. David was a musical composer, player, and singer, 1 Sam. 16:16-18
 2. He initiated and organized the Levitical music groups, or Temple singers, 1 Chr. 15:1-16:43, 25:1-31; 2 Chr. 29:25-30
 3. The first two books of the Psalms are attributed to him, Ps. 72:20
 4. His Psalms appear in all five books of the Psalter

VI. THE STRUCTURE OF THE Psalter

- A. There is no general theme or pattern. There is:
1. a general introduction (characteristic of a righteous person) – Psalm 1
 2. every one of the five divisions of books ends with a doxology, 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48
 3. a general close (doxology) – Psalm 150

B. Characteristics of the Five Books

1. Book 1 – Psalms 1-41
 - a. all but 4 attributed to David (1; 2; 10; 33)
 - b. YHWH as title for God predominates, YHWH – 273 to *Elohim* – 15
 - c. the historical setting was possibly David's days in conflict with Saul
2. Book 2 – Psalms 42-72 (72:20 shows editor)
 - a. Psalms 42-49 to sons of Korah (except 43)
 - b. *Elohim* as title for God predominates, *Elohim* - 164 to YHWH - 30
 - c. the historical setting was possibly David's days as King
3. Book 3 – Psalms 73-89
 - a. Psalms 73-83, Asaph
 - b. Psalms 84-88, sons of Korah (except 86)
 - c. 26 psalms attributed to David
 - d. YHWH as title for God 44 times; *Elohim* 43 times
 - e. the historical setting was possibly Assyrian crisis
4. Book 4 – Psalms 90-106
 - a. Psalm 101; 103 to David
 - b. Psalm 90 to Moses
 - c. all others anonymous
 - d. YHWH used 104 times; *Elohim* - 7 times
 - e. the historical setting was possibly Babylonian crisis
5. Book 5 – Psalms 107-150
 - a. Psalm 119 is an extended acrostic on God's Word
 - b. YHWH is used 236 times; *Elohim* 7 times
 - c. Psalms 146-150 are praise psalms which all begin with "Praise the Lord"
 - d. the historical setting was possibly hope in God's future blessings

C. Numbering of Psalms Varies

1. Jewish tradition
 - a. Berachoth 9b – Psalms 1 and 2 counted as 1
 - b. Shabbath 16 – total number of psalms was 147 to match the years of Jacob's life
2. Greek translation
 - a. Psalms 9 and 10 are together making one acrostic psalm
 - b. Psalms 114 and 115 are together, both being Hallel Psalms
 - c. Psalms 116 and 147 are divided into 2 each
3. The number of Psalms may be related to the annual Scripture reading cycle of the early synagogue

D. A sample of ways to group the Psalms:

1. by theme or topic
 - a. hymns of praise
 - (1) to God as creator, 8; 19; 104; 139; 148
 - (2) to God in general, 33; 103; 113; 117; 134-136; 145-147
 - b. hymns of thanksgiving, 9-10; 11; 16; 30; 32; 34; 92; 116; 138
 - c. laments/dirges/complaints
 - (1) corporate, 12; 14; 44; 53; 58; 60; 74; 79; 80; 83; 85; 89; 90; 94; 106; 123; 126; 137

- (2) individual, 3-7; 3; 17; 22; 25-28; 31; 35; 38-43; 69-71; 86; 88; 102; 109; 120; 130; 139-143
 - d. hymns of kingship
 - (1) God as king, 47; 93; 96-99
 - (2) King of Israel or Messiah, 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 110
 - e. hymns about Zion, 46; 48; 76; 84; 87; 122
 - f. hymns of liturgy
 - (1) covenant renewal, 50; 81
 - (2) priestly blessings, 134
 - (3) about Temple, 15; 24; 68
 - g. hymns about wisdom, 36; 37; 49; 73; 111; 112; 127; 128; 133
 - h. hymns about faith in YHWH's faithfulness, 11; 16; 23; 62; 63; 91; 121; 131
 - i. condemnation of false gods and idolatry, 82; 115
- 2. by author or speaker
 - a. hymns of David using mostly YHWH as the name of Deity, Psalms 1-41
 - b. hymns of David using mostly *Elohim* as the name of Deity, Psalms 51-72
 - c. hymns by David's Levitical musicians and singers
 - (1) Korah and sons, Psalms 42-49; 84-88
 - (2) Asaph and sons, Psalms 73-83
 - d. hymns by praisers, Psalms 111-118; 140-150
 - e. hymns by pilgrims coming to Jerusalem to worship at a feast day, Psalms 120-134
- 3. by historical events in Israel's history based on superscription or content, Psalms 14; 44; 46-48; 53; 66; 68; 74; 76; 79; 80; 83; 85; 87; 108; 122; 124-126; and 129

E. Related Psalms

- 1. Psalms 14 and 53 are the same except for the name of God
 - a. Psalm 14 has YHWH
 - b. Psalm 104 has *Elohim*
- 2. Psalms 103 and 104 are linked:
 - a. same opening and close
 - b. Psalm 103 has YHWH as Savior and Redeemer
 - c. Psalm 104 has *Elohim* as Creator and Sustainer
- 3. Psalms 32 and 51 both possibly relate to David's sin with Bathsheba
- 4. Psalms 57:7-11 and 60:5-12 are combined into Psalm 108
- 5. Psalm 18 is repeated from 2 Sam. 21:1-51

F. Why 150 Psalms in 5 books

- 1. possibly 150 psalms paralleled the 150 synagogue divisions of the Law for public reading on the Sabbaths
- 2. possibly five books paralleled the five books of Moses

VII. MUSICAL TERMS IN THE Psalter

A. Musical terms in the superscriptions used to describe different types of psalms

- 1. *MIZMOR* means "to pluck." These were psalms that were meant to be sung and accompanied by musical instruments. There are 57 of these.
- 2. *SHIR* refers to songs of all kinds. There are 30 of these.

3. *MASCHIL* or *MASKIL* which denotes songs of special skill or teaching psalms. There are 30 of these.
 4. *MITCHTAM* or *MITKHTAM* – the meaning of this term is uncertain. From a possible
 - a. Hebrew root it could mean “golden” or “precious”
 - b. from an Akkadian root it could mean “hidden” or “unpublished”
 - c. from an Arabic root it could mean “atoning” or “forgiving”
 There are 6 of these.
 5. *PALAL* means prayer. It is used to describe the psalms of David in books I & II (cf. Psalm 72:20). It is also found in the superscription of Psalms 17; 86; 90; 102; 142; and possibly 122.
- B. Musical terms describing the playing or singing of the psalm
1. *SELAH* is used 71 times in 39 psalms and Hab. 3:3, 9, 13. Its meaning is uncertain. There have been several theories:
 - a. from the LXX “interlude” for meditation or dramatic effect
 - b. from Hebrew root “to lift,” therefore, an elevation or forte
 - c. the rabbis say it is an affirmation like “amen,” which means “forever”
 2. *SHIGGAION* or *SHIGIONOTH* is used in Psalm 7 and Habakkuk 3. It is a lament or dirge expressing sorrow. It has a highly emotional poetic form.
 3. *NEGINOTH* is used 6 times in the Psalms and in Hab. 3:19. It means “on stringed instruments.”
 4. *SHEMINITH* is used twice. It may mean “on the octave” or “on the eight.” It is opposite of *ALAMOTH*, therefore, possibly for male voices (cf. 1 Chr. 15:21).
 5. *ALAMOTH* is used 4 times. It refers to female soprano voices (cf. 1 Chr. 15:20).
 6. *MECHILOTH* is used once. It means “on wind instruments.”
 7. *GITTITH* is used 3 times. It means “on the harp.”
 8. There are several references to specifically named tunes, Psalm 9; 22; 45; 53; 56; 57-59; 60; 62; 69; 75; 77; 80; and 88

VIII. PURPOSE OF PSALMS

- A. Israel believed that all of life was related to God by covenant. The Psalms are humanity’s release to God of the deepest emotions of life (awe and intimacy). They functioned in corporate worship as well as individual devotions. They were a liturgical way to recount and accent Israel’s history and theology.
- B. Israel believed in one and only one personal, caring God and that they were the special object of His love. Faith was not liturgical or creedal but personal and daily. The poetic form of the Psalms helps us express our religious self to God. The chief character of the OT is God!
- C. All of the Psalms may have begun as individual expressions of personal faith, which were later used by the community of faith (cf. Psalm 23; 139, etc).
- D. From the NT use of quotes from the Psalms it is obvious that they were revelatory, as well as emotive. They reflect truths about God, humanity, sin, hope, Messiah, and restoration.

IX. INTERPRETIVE PROCEDURES

- A. This commentary seeks to interpret the Psalms in light of
 1. their historical setting (i.e., worldview)
 2. their genre
 3. seeing how NT authors used the Psalms (LXX) to reveal and explain the gospel of Jesus Christ
 4. finally, applying these truths to our day, but this significance must follow #1, 2, 3!
- B. I have chosen to analyze the parallelism by listing the elements. This does violate the genre, but hopefully will help modern western thinkers to see the original author's emphasis and content.
- C. Each reader/interpreter needs to seek the original author's main points and not interject his/her own. This is difficult in an ancient, poetic book. Often moderns read the Psalms like the morning newspaper, written directly to them in their language and culture. With this interpretive method, one can make the Psalms say anything about anything!

There should be a main point to each and every strophe. The problem is, strophes are not a technical issue but a subjective issue. We must all struggle with where to divide these ancient poems and be sure we have as many truths/points as the original inspired author.
- D. One final point, for me, the NT is the proper interpreter of the OT. The Psalms are not the new covenant but Mosaic covenant! They must be interpreted and applied in light of NT revelation.

PSALM 1

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Righteous and the Wicked Contrasted No MT Intro	The Way of the Righteous and the End of the Ungodly	The Contrasting Fate of the Righteous and the Wicked (A Wisdom Psalm)	True Happiness	The Two Paths
1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-2 1:3-4a
1:4-6	1:4-6	1:4-6	1:4-6	1:4b-6

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is a general introduction to the Psalter. Kyle Yates, in his wonderful book *Preaching From the Psalms*, pp. 115-124, says this psalm describes "the kingdom man."
 1. his character
 2. his influence
 3. his conduct
 4. his destiny

*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the strophe divisions as they understand them. Every strophe has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs or strophes). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation at the paragraph or strophe level, can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author was inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility to apply the inspired truth to their day and lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.

- B. This Psalm expresses the traditional Jewish teaching that in this life the righteous will be blessed and the wicked punished (i.e., the two ways, cf. Deut. 30:1,15-20). There are types of people who are similarly described in Jer. 17:5-8.
- C. Jesus apparently used Psalm 1 as a basic outline for His Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7.

In this context these words are not addressed to all humans, but to the covenant people, people who know YHWH's revelation but have chosen to ignore it. It seems that Matt. 7:13-14 is also based on this same crucial aspect of faith. Below are the notes from my commentary on Matthew. You can see the entire commentary at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

MATTHEW 7

7:13 Does this verse imply (1) entering a gate and then walking on a path; or (2) walking on a path which leads to a gate; or (3) is it an example of Hebrew parallelism? The fact that the gate appears first and then a way implies that this is referring to one's coming to know God in a personal way through Jesus' teachings and then living a new kingdom life. Some of the confusion here can be attributed to the threefold aspect of biblical salvation: (1) initial faith and repentance; (2) lifestyle Christlikeness; and (3) eschatological culmination. This parable is paralleled in Luke 13:23-27. See Special Topic: Use of "Door" in the NT at 6:6.

▣ **"the narrow gate"** This type of proverbial truth has traditionally been known as "the two ways" (cf. Deut. 30:15, 19; Ps. 1; Pro. 4:10-19; Isa. 1:19-20 and Jer. 21:8). It is hard to identify to whom Jesus was speaking: (1) to disciples, (2) to Pharisees, or (3) to the crowd. The general context would imply that the verse relates to 5:20 and 5:48. If so, then this would imply that the restricted nature of the gate was not rules, like Pharisaic legalism, but lifestyle love flowing out of a relationship with Christ. Christ does have rules (cf. Matt. 11:29-30), but they flow from a changed heart! If we place this verse in relation to a Jewish-Gentile context (cf. 6:7, 32), then it relates to belief in Jesus as Savior (gate) and Lord (way).

Starting with vv. 13-27 there is a series of contrasts related to religious people.

1. the two ways of performing religious duties (vv. 13-14)
2. the two types of religious leaders (vv. 15-23)
3. the two foundations of a religious life (vv. 24-27)

The question is not to which group of religious people Jesus referred, but to how religious people respond to their understanding of God's will. Some use religion as a guise to gain immediate praise and rewards from men. It is a "me" and "now" focused lifestyle (cf. Isa. 29:13; Col. 2:16-23). True disciples order their lives in light of Jesus' words about the present and coming Kingdom of God.

▣ **"for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction"** "Way" can be (1) a metaphor for lifestyle and (2) the earliest title of the church (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; 18:25-26). This verse implies that salvation is not an easy decision which fits in with the mainstream of culture, but a decisive change of life which issues in obedience to the principles of God. The fact that one way leads to destruction shows the ultimate outcome of those who live lives independent of God. Often they seem very religious (cf. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 7:21-23; Col. 2:23)!

This phrase has a typical Greek manuscript variable. In the first of the verse it says, "enter by the narrow gate," but in the second half "the gate" is omitted in the uncial manuscript $\aleph^*$, some old Latin manuscripts, some Vulgate manuscripts, the Diatessaron, and the Greek texts used by Clement and Eusebius. It is present in the uncials $\aleph^1$, B, C, L, W, and some old Latin, Vulgate, Syriac, and Coptic manuscripts. So the question is, "Was it inserted for balance" or "fell out by accident?" The UBS⁴ gives the longer text (i.e., its inclusion) a "B" rating (almost certain). However, its inclusion or exclusion does not change the meaning of the text. This is true of the vast majority of the NT variations in the 5,300 Greek New Testaments in existence today! See Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 19.

7:14 In a day of "easy-believeism" this is a needed balance! This is not saying that Christianity is dependent on human effort, but rather that the life of faith will be filled with persecution. "Narrow" in this verse shares the same root word as "tribulation" or "persecution" in other NT passages. This emphasis is the exact opposite of Matt. 11:29-30. These two verses could be characterized as the "gate" and the "way." We come to God through Jesus as a free gift of God (cf. Rom. 3:24; 5:15-17; 6:23; Eph.

2:8-9), but once we know Him, it is the pearl of great price for which we sell all that we have to follow Him. Salvation is absolutely free, but it costs everything that we are and have.

The phrase “few they are that find it” should be compared with Matt. 7:13 and Luke 13:23-24. The question is “are more going to be lost than saved?” Is the verse teaching this numerical distinction?

- D. The rabbis combine Psalm 1 and 2 into one psalm. This may be confirmed in
1. Acts 13:33, which calls Psalm 2 “the first psalm”
 2. the use of “blessed” in Ps. 1:1 and 2:12 may be a literary technique called *inclusio*
 3. surprisingly neither Psalm 1 nor Psalm 2 has an introductory phrase in the MT

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-3

¹How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
²But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
³He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.

1:1-3 There seems to be a progression of time elements in these opening verses. Hebrew VERBS do not express time, only context. It is possible that

1. the PERFECT VERBS of v. 1 denote past time (i.e., how that person lived)
2. the IMPERFECT VERB of v. 2 denotes current time (i.e., way the person lives every day)
3. verse 3 starts out with a PERFECT VERB with a *waw* (see Hebrew grammar article beginning on page iii) which could denote a future condition like blessedness (i.e., expected fruitfulness)

1:1 The word “blessed” is PLURAL but the OBJECT is SINGULAR, “the man.” This could be explained by

1. the PLURAL is a Hebrew way to denote all the blessings of God
2. “the man” is a SINGULAR PLURAL denoting all men who know and obey God (i.e., James 1:2-23). This is how the term “a tree” is used in v. 3a.

This word (“blessed,” BDB 80) means “happy,” “honored,” or “well off” (cf. Matt. 5:3-12).

No human can be “happy” apart from God. We were created by Him and for Him (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8). Until our relationship with our Creator is vibrant, all other areas of physical life cannot bring true, lasting happiness! This relationship has observable characteristics!

▣ Notice the three *Qal* PERFECT VERBS which denote characteristic actions and attitude (i.e., settled character).

1. does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
2. does not stand in the way of sinners
3. does not sit in the seat of scoffers

The “blessed” faithful follower is described by negations in v. 1 and by their actions in v. 2.

▣ **“walk in the counsel of the wicked”** This speaks of one’s lifestyle associates. This emphasis on lifestyle is reinforced by the use of the VERBS “walk. . .stand. . .sit.” We are affected by the group to which we belong, our peers (cf. 1 Cor. 15:33).

The term “wicked” (BDB 957) refers not only to active law breakers (i.e., commission and omission) but also to those who leave God out of their lives (i.e., practical atheist).

▣ **“LORD”** This is the covenant name for Israel’s Deity, YHWH.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

A. *El* (BDB 42, KB 48)

1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, “to be strong” or “to be powerful” (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).
2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is *El* (Ras Shamra texts).
3. In the Bible *El* is often compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.
 - a. *El-Elyon* (“God Most High,” BDB 42 & 751 II), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
 - b. *El-Roi* (“God who sees” or “God who reveals Himself,” BDB 42 & 909), Gen. 16:13
 - c. *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty” or “God of all compassion” or “God of the mountain,” BDB 42 & 994), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3
 - d. *El-Olam* (“the Everlasting God,” BDB 42 & 761), Genesis 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God’s promise to David, 2 Sam. 7:13,16
 - e. *El-Berit* (“God of the Covenant,” BDB 42 & 136), Jdgs. 9:46
4. *El* is equated with
 - a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
 - b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, “I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father”
 - c. *Shaddai* in Gen. 49:25
 - d. “jealousy” in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
 - e. “mercy” in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31;
 - f. “great and awesome” in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
 - g. “knowledge” in 1 Sam. 2:3
 - h. “my strong refuge” in 2 Sam. 22:33
 - i. “my avenger” in 2 Sam. 22:48
 - j. “holy one” in Isa. 5:16
 - k. “might” in Isa. 10:21
 - l. “my salvation” in Isa. 12:2
 - m. “great and powerful” in Jer. 32:18
 - n. “retribution” in Jer. 51:56
5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Joshua 22:22 (*El, Elohim, YHWH*, repeated).

B. *Elyon* (BDB 751, KB 832)

1. Its basic meaning is “high,” “exalted,” or “lifted up” (cf. Gen. 40:17; 1 Kgs. 9:8; 2 Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).

2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
 - a. *Elohim* – Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
 - b. *YHWH* – Gen. 14:22; 2 Sam. 22:14
 - c. *El-Shaddai* – Ps. 91:1,9
 - d. *El* – Num. 24:16
 - e. *Elah* – used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *illair* (Aramaic for “High God”) in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
 3. It is often used by non-Israelites.
 - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
 - b. Balaam, Num. 24:16
 - c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8
 - d. Luke’s Gospel in the NT, writing to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)
- C. *Elohim* (PLURAL), *Eloah* (SINGULAR), used primarily in poetry (BDB 43, KB 52)
1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.
 2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 3:6; 20:3). Abraham’s family were polytheistic (cf. Jos. 24:2).
 3. It can refer to Israeli judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6).
 4. The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7.
 5. In the Bible it is the first title/name for Deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with YHWH. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Psalm 104).

It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel YHWH as Psalm 14 (*Elohim*, vv. 1,2,5; YHWH, vv. 2,6; even *Adon*, v. 4).
 6. Although PLURAL and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the SINGULAR VERB to denote the monotheistic usage.
 7. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is PLURAL! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories.
 - a. Hebrew has many PLURALS, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called “the plural of majesty,” where the PLURAL is used to magnify a concept.
 - b. This may refer to the angelic council, with whom God meets in heaven and who does His bidding (cf. 1 Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).
 - c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates; Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods, and from the NT Jesus is God the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).
- D. YHWH (BDB 217, KB 394)
1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant-making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Psalm 103).

This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Genesis 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4-3:24 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.

2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said “*men* began to call upon the name of the LORD” (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).
 - a. from an Arabic root, “to show fervent love”
 - b. from an Arabic root “to blow” (YHWH as storm God)
 - c. from a Ugaritic (Canaanite) root “to speak”
 - d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE meaning “the One who sustains,” or “the One who establishes”
 - e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form “the One who is,” or “the One who is present” (in future sense, “the One who will be”)
 - f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form “the One who causes to be”
 - g. from the Hebrew root “to live” (e.g., Gen. 3:21), meaning “the ever-living, only-living One”
 - h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67). The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form.
 - (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah, BDB 219, cf. Exod. 15:2; 17:16; Ps. 89:8; 104:35)
 - (2) *Yahu* (“iah” ending of names, e.g., Isaiah)
 - (3) *Yo* (“Jo” beginning of names, e.g., Joshua or Joel)
3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
4. As with *El*, YHWH is often combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combination terms, here are some.
 - a. *YHWH – Yireh* (YHWH will provide, BDB 217 & 906), Gen. 22:14
 - b. *YHWH – Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer, BDB 217 & 950, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 15:26
 - c. *YHWH – Nissi* (YHWH is my banner, BDB 217 & 651), Exod. 17:15
 - d. *YHWH – Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you, BDB 217 & 872, *Piel* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 31:13
 - e. *YHWH – Shalom* (YHWH is Peace, BDB 217 & 1022), Jdgs. 6:24

- f. *YHWH – Sabbaoth* (YHWH of hosts, BDB 217 & 878), 1 Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets
- g. *YHWH – Ro ‘I* (YHWH is my shepherd, BDB 217 & 944, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Ps. 23:1
- h. *YHWH – Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness, BDB 217 & 841), Jer. 23:6
- i. *YHWH – Shammah* (YHWH is there, BDB 217 & 1027), Ezek. 48:35

▣ **“path of sinners”** In the root meaning of the word “path” is “way” (cf. v. 6 [twice]) and is another term used for lifestyle. NT faithful followers were first described as people of “the Way” (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22). This implies that biblical faith is more than assent to a doctrine or the participation in a ritual, but also lifestyle obedience and personal relationship (i.e., “walk,” cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15).

▣ **“the seat of scoffers”** We all have presuppositions about life. “Scoffers” (BDB 539, KB 529, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) represents the stereotype of an irreligious pessimist (i.e., Isa. 5:19; Jer. 17:15; Ezek. 12:22,27; Mal. 2:17; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Pet. 3:3-4; Jude v. 18).

1:2 “his delight is in the law of the LORD” The term “law” (BDB 435) means “teaching.” In the Psalms “the law” always refers to the general teachings of God (cf. Psalm 119), not just the writings of Moses. The law was not a burden to the OT believer (cf. Ps. 19:7-13), but the very revelation of YHWH for longevity, peace, security, joy, and abundance.

SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR GOD’S REVELATION (USING DEUTERONOMY AND PSALMS)

- I. “Statutes,” BDB 349, “an enactment, decree, or ordinance”
 - A. Masculine, חֶק – Deut. 4:1,5,6,8,14,40,45; 5:1; 6:1,24; 7:11; 11:32; 16:12; 17:19; 26:17; 27:10; Ps. 2:7; 50:16; 81:4; 99:7; 105:10,45; 148:6
 - B. Feminine, חֻקָּה – Deut. 6:2; 8:11; 10:13; 11:1; 28:15,45; 30:10,16; Ps. 89:31; 119:5,8,12,16, 23, 26,33,48,54,64,68,71,80,83,112,124,135,145,155,171
- II. “Law” BDB 435, “instruction”
 - Deut. 1:5; 4:44; 17:11,18,19; 27:3,8,26; 28:58,61; 29:21,29; 30:10; 31:9; Ps. 1:2; 19:7; 78:10; 94:12; 105:45; 119:1,18,29,34,44,51,53,55,61,70,72,77, 85,92,97,109,113,126,136,142,150,153,163,165,174
- III. “Testimonies” BDB 730, “divine laws”
 - A. PLURAL, עֵדָה – Deut. 4:45; 6:17,20; Ps. 25:10; 78:56; 93:5; 99:7; 119:22,24,46,59,79,95, 119,125,138,146,152,167,168
 - B. עֵדוּת or עֵדָה – Ps. 19:7; 78:5; 81:5; 119:2,14,31,36,88,99,111,129,144,157
- IV. “Precepts” BDB 824, “a charge”
 - Ps. 19:8; 103:18; 111:7; 119:4,15,27,40,45,56,63,69,78,87, 93,94,100,104, 110,128,134,141,159,168,173
- V. “Commandments” BDB 846
 - Deut. 4:2,40; 5:29; 6:1,2,17,25; 8:1,2,11; 10:13; 11:13; 15:5; 26:13, 17; 30:11,16; Ps. 19:8; 119:6,10,19,21,32,35,47,48,60,66,73,86,96,98,115,127, 131,143,151, 166,176

VI. “Judgments/ordinances” BDB 1048, “rulings” or “justice”

- Deut. 1:17; 4:1,5,8,14,45; 7:12; 16:18; 30:16; 33:10,21; Ps. 10:5; 18:22; 19:19; 48:11; 89:30; 97:8; 105:5,7; 119:7,13,20,30,39,43,52,62,75,84,102, 106,120,137,149,156,160,164; 147:19; 149:9

VII. “His ways” BDB 202, YHWH’s guidelines for His people’s lifestyle

- Deut. 8:6; 10:12; 11:22,28; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16; 32:4; Ps. 119:3, 5,37,59

VIII. “His words”

- A. BDB 202 – Deut. 4:10,12,36; 9:10; 10:4; Ps. 119:9,16,17,25,28,42,43,49,57,65,74,81, 89,101,105,107,114,130,139,147,160,161,169
- B. BDB 57
 - 1. “word” – Deut. 17:19; 18:19; 33:9; Ps. 119:11,67,103,162,170,172
 - 2. “promise” – Ps. 119:38,41,50,58,76,82,116,133,140,148,154
 - 3. “command” – Ps. 119:158

▣ **“he meditates day and night”** This VERB (BDB 211, KB 237, *Qal* IMPERFECT) denotes a “soft reading” of YHWH-revealed truths. The ancients did not read silently, so it must refer to quiet reading.

Notice how this VERB is used.

1. meditating on YHWH’s teachings – Ps. 1:2; Jos. 1:8
2. meditating on YHWH Himself – Ps. 63:7
3. meditating on YHWH’s deeds – Ps. 77:13; 143:5
4. meditating on terror – Isa. 33:18

What do you meditate on?

Our thought life is the seed bed for our actions (cf. Pro. 23:7). This verse emphasizes the principle of continually (i.e., day and night) keeping God and His will in our consciousness. This was the original purpose symbolized in Deut. 6:8-9. I have included the comment from these verses here.

Deuteronomy 6

6:8 “you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead” Originally this phrase seems to be used as a metaphor (cf. LXX). The context is lifestyle-teaching opportunities for God’s word. However, the rabbis took this verse very literally and they began to wrap a leather strap around their left hand with a small box (*tefillin*) attached which contained selected Scriptures from the Torah. The same kind of box was also strapped to their forehead. These “phylacteries” or “frontals” (BDB 377) are also mentioned in Deut. 11:18 and Matt. 23:5.

6:9 “And you shall write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates” This again is a symbolic gesture that God is to have a part, not only in our home life, but in our social life (i.e., gate, cf. 21:19; 22:15,24). As the threshold (BDB 265) of the home was often seen as the place of the demonic in the Greek and Roman worlds, in the Jewish world it represented the presence of God (i.e., the place where the blood of the Passover was placed, cf. Exod. 12:7,22,23).

“Your gates” (BDB 1044) may refer to the place of social meeting and justice (i.e., like the city gates). Usually, these small boxes and door markers (*mezuzah*) contained several set passages of Scripture: Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21 and Exod. 13:1-10,11-16.

1:3 “like a tree” There is a striking metaphor of this in Jer. 17:5-8. For a desert community, the fruitful tree was a symbol of strength and prosperity.

▣ The VERB (BDB 1060, KB 1670, *firmly* planted,” *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) means “transplanted” (cf. Ps. 92:14; Jer. 17:8; Ezek. 17:10,22; 19:10,13; Hos. 9:13). This implies that this person, like all people, was

not originally a fruitful believer. Maturity takes time, effort, and especially the grace of God. Paul uses a litany of OT texts to illustrate the initial evil of humans after the Fall (cf. Rom. 3:10-18).

1. vv. 10-12 – Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-4
2. v. 13 – Ps. 5:9; 140:3
3. v. 14 – Ps. 10:7
4. vv. 15-17 – Isa. 59:7-8
5. v. 18 – Ps. 36:1

All of us are “transplanted” from rebellion into blessedness!

▣ **“streams of water”** This is PLURAL and speaks of an elaborate irrigation system.

▣ **“yields its fruit in its season”** This is a biblical metaphor to describe a mature spiritual life (cf. Matt. 7:15-27). The goal of faith is faithfulness! This same imagery has an eschatological setting in Revelation 22.

▣ **“its leaf does not wither”** This is an eschatological theme (cf. Ezek. 47:12; Rev. 22:2). Agricultural metaphors were very powerful for farmers and herders in semi-arid areas.

1:3-4 “whatever he does, he prospers. . .the wicked are not so” This is the OT view that temporal blessings and cursings were based on one’s spiritual life (cf. Deuteronomy 28 and 30).

However, this must be balanced with the life of Job, Psalm 37 and 73, and also NT revelation. The OT is a performance-based covenant but the NT is a grace-based covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38; Eph. 2:8-10). Both were meant to produce godly followers who demonstrate the character of YHWH.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:4-6

- ⁴**The wicked are not so,
But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.**
⁵**Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.**
⁶**For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish.**

1:4 “like chaff” This is a common biblical metaphor for that which is transitory, temporary, or fleeting (cf. 35:5; 83:13; Job 21:18; Isa. 17:13; 29:5; 40:24; 41:15-16; Jer. 13:24; Hos. 13:3).

There are two ways to look at the judgment of the wicked.

1. temporal – no joy, no prosperity, early death (cf. Matthew 7)
2. eschatological – end-time judgment scene, where one’s eternal destiny is revealed (cf. Matthew 25; Revelation 20)

1:5 “stand” This VERB (BDB 763, KB 840) has the connotation of a legal setting (cf. Pro. 19:21; Isa. 14:24; note Rom. 8:31-38). Sinners/wicked will have

1. no right to present their case
2. no right to even be present in court
3. no possible excuses
4. no hope for a positive judgment

▣ **“the judgment”** This implies that individuals are responsible for their actions and will one day give an account to God (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Rev. 20:11-15). In the OT this truth is gradually developed (cf. Job 19:25-27; Dan. 12:2).

▣ **“the wicked. . .sinners”** There are several descriptive titles given to those who do not “walk/stand/sit.”

1. the wicked, vv. 1, 5, 6 (BDB 957)
2. sinners, vv. 1, 5 (BDB 308)
3. scoffers, v. 1 (BDB 539)

The NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1202, lists the different Hebrew terms that describe those who do not know and follow YHWH (i.e., the righteous).

1. workers of iniquity – Ps. 28:3; 92:7; 101:8; 141:9
2. evildoers – Ps. 26:5; 37:9; Pro. 24:19
3. evil men – Ps. 10:15; Pro. 4:14; 14:19; 24:20
4. ruthless men – Job 15:20; 27:13; Isa. 13:11
5. sinners – Ps. 1:1,5; 104:35
6. scorers – Ps. 1:1; Pro. 9:7
7. liars – Ps. 58:3
8. transgressors – Pro. 2:22; 21:18; Jer. 12:1; Hab. 1:13
9. the enemy – Job 27:7; Ps. 3:7; 17:9; 55:3

▣ **“in the assembly of the righteous”** Notice the parallelism between this phrase and “in the judgment.” These phrases must refer to a gathering of true, faithful followers where the wicked are not recognized or able to speak.

The “assembly” can refer to

1. gathered worship (i.e., Ps. 22:25; 35:18; 40:9-10)
2. a title for the people of God (i.e., Exod. 12:3,6,19,47; 16:1,2,9,10,22)

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Righteousness” is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God’s character is described as “just” or “righteous” (BDB 841). The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God’s righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind’s interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind’s loyalty was tested (cf. Genesis 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Genesis 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God’s first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind’s repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of

appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

1. declaring mankind righteous through the work of Christ (i.e., forensic righteousness).
2. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (i.e., imputed righteousness).
3. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (i.e., Christlikeness, the restoration of the image of God) in mankind.
4. restoring the fellowship of the Garden of Eden

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e., freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation, based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called “justification by faith.” The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term “righteousness” in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term *dikaïosunē* in its Hebrew sense of the term *SDQ* used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of Deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy there was no clear delineation between the secular (society’s norms) and the sacred (God’s will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as “justice” (relating to society) and “righteousness” (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. This has been accomplished through the Father’s love, mercy, and grace; the Son’s life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit’s wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine’s position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term “the righteousness of God” is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e., the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification], while for the Catholics it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God [experiential progressive sanctification]. In reality it is surely both!!)

In my view all of the Bible from Genesis 4 - Revelation 20 is a record of God’s restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Genesis 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Revelation 21-22). God’s image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group.

1. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)
 - a. Romans 3:26
 - b. 2 Thessalonians 1:5-6
 - c. 2 Timothy 4:8
 - d. Revelation 16:5

2. Jesus is righteous
 - a. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
 - b. Matthew 27:19
 - c. 1 John 2:1,29; 3:7
3. God's will for His creation is righteousness
 - a. Leviticus 19:2
 - b. Matthew 5:48 (cf. Matt. 5:17-20)
4. God's means of providing and producing righteousness
 - a. Romans 3:21-31
 - b. Romans 4
 - c. Romans 5:6-11
 - d. Galatians 3:6-14
 - e. Given by God
 - 1) Romans 3:24; 6:23
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 1:30
 - 3) Ephesians 2:8-9
 - f. Received by faith
 - 1) Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 5:21
 - g. Through acts of the Son
 - 1) Romans 5:21
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 5:21
 - 3) Philippians 2:6-11
5. God's will is that His followers be righteous
 - a. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
 - b. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
 - c. Ephesians 1:4; 2:10
 - d. 1 Timothy 6:11
 - e. 2 Timothy 2:22; 3:16
 - f. John 3:7
 - g. 1 Peter 2:24
6. God will judge the world by righteousness
 - a. Acts 17:31
 - b. 2 Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

1. a decree of God
2. a gift of God
3. an act of Christ
4. a life to be lived

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued, which will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the *Parousia*!

Here is a good quote to conclude this discussion. It is taken from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* from IVP

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther’s view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God’s righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer’s relationship to God has three aspects.

1. the gospel is a person (emphasis of the Eastern Church and Calvin)
2. the gospel is truth (emphasis of Augustine and Luther)
3. the gospel is a changed life (Catholic emphasis)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!

1:6 “the LORD knows” The term “know” means “intimate personal relationship” (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW (using mostly Deuteronomy as a paradigm)

The Hebrew word “know” (BDB 393) has several senses (semantic fields) in the *Qal*.

1. to understand good and evil – Gen. 3:22; Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:14-15; Jonah 4:11
2. to know by understanding – Deut. 9:2,3,6; 18:21
3. to know by experience – Deut. 3:19; 4:35; 8:2,3,5; 11:2; 20:20; 31:13; Jos. 23:14
4. to consider – Deut. 4:39; 11:2; 29:16
5. to know personally
 - a. a person – Gen. 29:5; Exod. 1:8; Deut. 22:2; 33:9
 - b. a god – Deut. 11:28; 13:2,6,13; 28:64; 29:26; 32:17
 - c. YHWH – Deut. 4:35,39; 7:9; 29:6; Isa. 1:3; 56:10-11
 - d. a person sexually – Gen. 4:1,17,25; 24:16; 38:26
6. a learned skill or knowledge – Isa. 29:11,12; Amos 5:16
7. be wise – Deut. 29:4; Pro. 1:2; 4:1; Isa. 29:24
8. God’s knowledge
 - a. of Moses – Deut. 34:10
 - b. of Israel – Deut. 31:21,27,29

▣ “the way of the wicked will perish” The theological question is what does “perish” (BDB 1, KB 2) mean?

1. total non-existence (i.e., annihilation)
2. will not last on earth (i.e., death)

The issue has become acute in the modern discussion of an eternal hell. Some evangelical scholars (i.e., John Stott) advocate a period of judgment, then non-existence for sinners instead of an eternal punishment. My problem is that the same word, “eternal,” used in Matt. 25:46, describes both “punishment” and “eschatological life.” I cannot see how an inspired writer can use them with differing senses in the same verse.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

I. Old Testament

- A. All humans go to *Sheol* (etymology uncertain, BDB 982), which is a way of referring to death or the grave, mostly in Wisdom Literature and Isaiah. In the OT it was a shadowy, conscious, but joyless existence (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17).
- B. *Sheol* characterized
 1. associated with God’s judgment (fire), Deut. 32:22
 2. associated with punishment even before Judgment Day, Ps. 18:4-5
 3. associated with *abaddon* (destruction), in which God is also present, Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2
 4. associated with “the Pit” (grave), Ps. 16:10; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 31:15-17
 5. wicked descend alive into *Sheol*, Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15
 6. personified often as an animal with a large mouth, Num. 16:30; Isa. 5:14; Hab. 2:5
 7. people there called *Repha'im* (i.e., “spirits of the dead”), Isa. 14:9-11

II. New Testament

- A. The Hebrew *Sheol* is translated by the Greek *Hades* (the unseen world)
- B. *Hades* characterized
 1. refers to death, Matt. 16:18
 2. linked to death, Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
 3. often analogous to the place of permanent punishment (*Gehenna*), Matt. 11:23 (OT quote); Luke 10:15; 16:23-24
 4. often analogous to the grave, Luke 16:23
- C. Possibly divided (rabbis)
 1. righteous part called paradise (really another name for heaven, cf. 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), Luke 23:43
 2. wicked part called *Tartarus*, 2 Peter 2:4, where it is a holding place for evil angels (cf. Genesis 6; I Enoch)
- D. *Gehenna*
 1. Reflects the OT phrase, “the valley of the sons of Hinnom,” (south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (BDB 574), was worshiped by child sacrifice (cf. 2 Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; 2 Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5.

2. Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH's judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.
3. The Jews of Jesus' day were so appalled by their ancestors' participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice, that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of Jesus' metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).
4. Jesus' usage of *Gehenna*
 - a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43
 - b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
 - c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
 - d. paralleled to *Sheol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
 - e. characterizes the wicked as "son of hell," Matt. 23:15
 - f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5
 - g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of humans (from *Sheol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude v. 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-11; 20:1,3).
 - h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41
- E. It is possible, because of the overlap of *Sheol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* that
 1. originally all humans went to *Sheol/Hades*
 2. their experience there (good/bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell)).
 3. the only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *Sheol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one cannot establish a doctrine on a parable.

III. Intermediate state between death and resurrection

- A. The NT does not teach the "immortality of the soul," which is one of several ancient views of the afterlife.
 1. human souls exist before their physical life
 2. human souls are eternal before and after physical death
 3. often the physical body is seen as a prison and death as release back to pre-existent state
- B. The NT hints at a disembodied state between death and resurrection
 1. Jesus speaks of a division between body and soul, Matt. 10:28
 2. Abraham may have a body now, Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:23
 3. Moses and Elijah have a physical body at the transfiguration, Matthew 17
 4. Paul asserts that at the Second Coming the souls with Christ will get their new bodies first, 1 Thess. 4:13-18
 5. Paul asserts that believers get their new spiritual bodies on Resurrection Day, 1 Cor. 15:23,52
 6. Paul asserts that believers do not go to *Hades*, but at death are with Jesus, 2 Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23. Jesus overcame death and took the righteous to heaven with Him, 1 Pet. 3:18-22.

IV. Heaven

- A. This term is used in three senses in the Bible.
 - 1. the atmosphere above the earth, Gen. 1:1,8; Isa. 42:5; 45:18
 - 2. the starry heavens, Gen. 1:14; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4; Heb. 4:14; 7:26
 - 3. the place of God's throne, Deut. 10:14; 1 Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 148:4; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 9:24 (third heaven, 2 Cor. 12:2)
- B. The Bible does not reveal much about the afterlife, probably because fallen humans have no way or capacity to understand (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9).
- C. Heaven is both a place (cf. John 14:2-3) and a person (cf. 2 Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven may be a restored Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-2; Revelation 21-22). The earth will be cleansed and restored (cf. Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; 2 Pet. 3:10). The image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) is restored in Christ. Now the intimate fellowship of the Garden of Eden is possible again.

However, this may be metaphorical (heaven as a huge, cubed city of Rev. 21:9-27) and not literal. 1 Corinthians 15 describes the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body as the seed to the mature plant. Again, 1 Cor. 2:9 (a quote from Isa. 64:4 and 65:17) is a great promise and hope! I know that when we see Him we will be like Him (cf. 1 John 3:2).

V. Helpful resources

- A. William Hendriksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*
- B. Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death's Door*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

- 1. What does the phrase "the two ways" mean?
- 2. Describe the difference between the righteous man and the wicked man from this Psalm.
- 3. Explain the use of the metaphors:
 - a. walk. . . way
 - b. tree
 - c. chaff
- 4. Does this Psalm teach an eschatological judgment or temporal judgment?
- 5. How does this Psalm relate to Job, or Psalm 37 and 73?
- 6. Why is this Psalm considered an introduction to the whole Psalter?

PSALM 2

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Reign of the LORD's Anointed No MT Intro	The Messiah's Triumph and Kingdom	The LORD Gives Universal Dominion to His King (A Royal Psalm, Composed for a Coronation)	God's Chosen King	The Messianic Drama
2:1-3	2:1-3	2:1-3	2:1-3	2:1-3
2:4-6	2:4-6	2:4-6	2:4-6	2:4-6
2:7-9	2:7-9	2:7-9	2:7-9	2:7-9
2:10-12	2:10-12	2:10-12b 2:12c	2:10-12	2:10-12

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is understood in the NT to be Messianic (cf. Heb. 1:5; 5:5, i.e., a son, cf. Ps. 1:7). It is used by
 - a. Peter in Acts 4:25
 - b. Paul in Acts 13:33
 The problem with this referring to Jesus is verse 7. See full notes there relating to "today I have begotten You."
- B. The Messianic reign will be universal (this is the obvious conclusion to monotheism (see Special Topic at Psalm 2:9, cf. Ps. 2:8; Rev. 12:5; 19:5; see my commentary on Revelation online at www.freebiblecommentary.org).

- C. There will be opposition from “the nations” (cf. 2:1-3). Many commentators relate this as an end-time military conflict (i.e., premillennialism) between those who know YHWH and His Messiah and those who do not! This is the consummation of the promise in Gen. 3:15 and the new heaven and new earth of Revelation 21-22. Everything in between is a terrible parenthesis of rebellion which abrogated God’s plan of fellowship with His highest creation (i.e., Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8).
- D. Conflict may come but YHWH has an eternal plan of redemption which involves His Messiah.

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH’s ETERNAL REDEPTIVE PLAN

I must admit to you the reader that I am biased at this point. My systematic theology is not Calvinism or Dispensationalism, but it is Great Commission evangelicalism (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). I believe God had an eternal plan for the redemption of all mankind (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezekiel 18; 36:22-39; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Rom. 3:9-18,19-20,21-31), all those created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The covenants are united in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Jesus is the mystery of God, hidden but now revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)! The NT gospel, not Israel, is the key to Scripture.

This pre-understanding colors all my interpretations of Scripture. I read all texts through it! It is surely a bias (all interpreters have them!), but it is a Scripturally-informed presupposition.

The focus of Genesis 1-2 is YHWH creating a place where He and His highest creation, mankind, can fellowship (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 3:8). Physical creation is a stage for this interpersonal divine agenda.

1. St. Augustine characterized it as a divine-shaped hole in every person that can be filled only by God Himself.
2. C. S. Lewis called this planet “the touched planet,” (i.e., prepared by God for humans).

The OT has many hints of this divine agenda.

1. Genesis 3:15 is the first promise that YHWH will not leave mankind in the terrible mess of sin and rebellion. It does not refer to Israel because there is no Israel, or covenant people, until the call of Abraham in Genesis 12.
2. Genesis 12:1-3 is YHWH’s initial call and revelation to Abraham which will become the covenant people, Israel. But even in this initial call, God had an eye to the whole world. Notice verse 3!
3. In Exodus 20 (Deuteronomy 5) YHWH gave His law to Moses to guide His special people. Notice that in Exod. 19:5-6 YHWH reveals to Moses the unique relationship Israel will have. But also notice that they were chosen, like Abraham, to bless the world (cf. Exod. 19:5, “for all the earth is Mine”). Israel was to be a mechanism for the nations to know YHWH and be attracted to Him. Tragically they failed (cf. Ezek. 36:27-38).
4. In the Psalms – 22:27-28; 66:4; 86:9 (Rev. 15:4)
5. Through the prophets YHWH continued to reveal His universal redemptive plans.
 - a. Isaiah – 2:2-4; 12:4-5; 25:6-9; 42:6,10-12; 45:22; 49:5-6; 51:4-5; 56:6-8; 60:1-3; 66:18,23
 - b. Jeremiah – 3:27; 4:2; 12:15-16; 16:19
 - c. Micah 4:1-3
 - d. Malachi 1:11

This universal emphasis is facilitated by the emergence of the “new covenant” (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) which focuses on the mercy of YHWH, not the performance of fallen humans. There is a “new heart,” a “new mind,” and a “new spirit.” Obedience is crucial but it is internal, not an eternal code only (cf. Rom. 3:21-31).

The NT clearly reinforces the universal redemptive plan in several ways.

1. The Great Commission – Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8
2. God’s eternal plan (i.e., predestined) – Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29
3. God wants all humans to be saved – John 3:16; 4:42; Acts 10:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:4-6; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:14
4. Christ unites the OT and NT – Gal. 3:28-29; Eph. 2:11-3:13; Col. 3:11. All human barriers and distinctions are removed in Christ. Jesus is the “mystery of God,” hidden but now revealed (Eph. 2:11-3:13).

The NT focuses on Jesus, not Israel. The gospel, not a nationality or geographical region, is central. Israel was the first revelation but Jesus is the ultimate revelation (cf. Matt. 5:17-48).

I hope you will take a moment to read the Special Topic: Why Do OT Covenant Promises Seem So Different from NT Covenant Promises. You can find it online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-3

- ¹Why are the nations in an uproar
And the peoples devising a vain thing?
²The kings of the earth take their stand
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
³“Let us tear their fetters apart
And cast away their cords from us!”

2:1-3 This describes the independence of the fallen human spirit (esp. v. 3; Genesis 3). Nationalism was God’s way of protecting humans from the one-world government (cf. Genesis 10-11; 2 Thessalonians 2). However, one day the world will be united under God’s Messiah. For the church this reversal of the Tower of Babel occurred at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2, i.e., “they all heard the gospel in their own language”).

2:1 The AB (p. 6) translates this first verse as “Why do the nations forgather, and the peoples number their troops?” This reading is based on

1. parallelism
2. Ugaritic word usage
3. the first VERB (“be in tumult,” BDB 921, KB 1189, *Qal* PERFECT) is found only here in the OT
4. the use of the root, “vain thing,” רִיק (BDB 937) in Gen. 14:14, is translated by the LXX (i.e., “he counted his own homebreds”)

It seems to form a better parallel to verse 2.

2:2 “kings. . .rulers” These are also parallel in Jdgs. 5:3; Pro. 8:15 (poetry).

☐ **“of the earth”** The term “earth” has a wide semantical field. Context must determine if it is local, regional, or global. The question here is “Did this Psalm originally refer to the nations surrounding Israel, the nations of the ANE, or all nations (cf. v. 8)?” In a sense this may be a multi-fulfillment prophecy like Isa. 7:14 or typology like Psalm 22. In light of this Psalm’s usage in the NT, it has a universal sense (i.e., Messianic, eschatological, global).

SPECIAL TOPIC: LAND, COUNTRY, EARTH

Like all Hebrew roots, context is crucial in determining the intended meaning. The limited number of Hebrew roots (i.e., an ancient Semitic language) causes each of them to function with different meanings and connotations. This root (BDB 75, KB 90) can mean

1. the whole planet (although the ancients did not realize its size and shape. Usually it is used of the “known world”)
 - a. Genesis 1-2; 6-9; 10:32; 11:1,4,8,9; 14:19; 18:18,25; 22:18, etc.
 - b. Exodus 9:29; 19:5
 - c. Psalm 8:1,9; 24:1; 47:2,7; Jer. 25:26,29,30
 - d. Proverbs 8:31
 - e. Isaiah 2:19,21; 6:3; 11:4,9,12; 12:5
2. earth in contrast to heaven
 - a. Genesis 1:2
 - b. Exodus 20:4
 - c. Deuteronomy 5:8; 30:19
 - d. Isaiah 37:16
3. metaphor for the human inhabitants of the planet
 - a. Genesis 6:11; 11:1
 - b. 1 Kings 2:2; 10:24
 - c. Job 37:12
 - d. Psalm 33:8; 66:4
4. country or territory
 - a. Genesis 10:10,11; 11:28,31
 - b. esp. Israel (a gift from YHWH, He owns it)
5. soil, cf. Joshua 7:21
6. underworld (KB 91)
 - a. Exodus 15:12
 - b. Psalm 22:29; 71:20; Jer. 17:13; Jonah 2:6
7. new world
 - a. Isaiah 9:1-7; 65:17; 66:22
 - b. see NT, Rom. 8:19-22; Gal. 6:15; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1,5

Remember, context, context, context is crucial. Often cognate roots can help, but not always.

▣ **“the LORD”** This is the covenant name for Israel’s Deity. See Special Topic at Ps. 1:1.

▣ **“Anointed”** This is the Hebrew word for “messiah.” It is translated into Greek as “Christ.” It symbolized the special presence of the Holy Spirit to accomplish God’s assigned task through a person (cf. 1 Sam.10:1,6; 16:13; 1 Kgs. 19:16; Isa. 61:1).

SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH

This is taken from my commentary note at Daniel 9:6. The difficulty in interpreting this verse is because of the possible meanings associated with the term Messiah or anointed one (BDB 603).

1. used of Jewish kings (e.g., 1 Sam. 2:10; 12:3)
2. used of Jewish priests (e.g., Lev. 4:3,5)
3. used of Cyrus (cf. Isa. 45:1)
4. #1 and #2 are combined in Psalm 110 and Zechariah 4
5. used of God's special coming, Davidic King to bring in the new age of righteousness
 - a. line of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10)
 - b. house of Jesse (cf. 2 Samuel 7)
 - c. universal reign (cf. Psalm 2; Isa. 9:6; 11:1-5; Mic. 5:1-4ff)

I personally am attracted to the identification of "an anointed one" with Jesus of Nazareth because of

1. the introduction of an eternal Kingdom in Daniel 2 during the fourth empire
2. the introduction of "a son of man" in Dan. 7:13 being given an eternal kingdom
3. the redemptive clauses of Dan. 9:24, which point toward a culmination of fallen world history
4. Jesus' use of the book of Daniel in the NT (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14)

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT TITLES OF THE SPECIAL COMING ONE

- A. Prophet – Deut. 18:15,18
- B. King
 1. from the tribe of Judah, Gen. 49:10; Ps. 60:7; 108:8
 2. from the family of David, 2 Samuel 7 (from Jesse, Isa. 11:1)
 3. from other texts, 1 Sam. 2:10; Ps. 89:3-4; Isa. 9,11; Jer. 30:8-9; Ezek. 37:21-22; Zech. 9:9-10
- C. King/Priest
 1. Psalm 110 (king, vv. 1-3; priest, v. 4)
 2. Zech. 4:14 (the two olive trees, the two anointed ones, Zerubbabel [line of David] and Joshua [line of Aaron])
- D. Anointed One (Messiah)
 1. God's King, Ps. 2:2; 45:7
 2. Spirit's presence, Isa. 11:2; 61:1
 3. Coming One, Dan. 9:26
 4. three OT leaders were anointed as a sign of God's call and empowering: kings (cf. Jdgs. 9:8,15; 1 Sam. 2:10; 9:16; 24:10; 2 Sam. 19:21; 23:1; Ps. 18:50), priests (cf. Exod. 28:41; Lev. 4:3; 6:22) and prophets (cf. 1 Kgs. 19:16)
- E. King's Son
 1. Ps. 2:7,12
 2. Israel's king as a symbol of God's reign (cf. 1 Samuel 8)
- F. Son of Man (Dan. 7:13)
 1. human, Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1

2. divine, Dan. 7:13

G. Special Redemptive Titles

1. Suffering Servant, Isa. 52:13-53:12
2. Suffering Shepherd, Zech. 12-14
3. Cornerstone, Ps. 118: Isa. 8:14-15; 28:16
4. Special Child, Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; Micah 5:2
5. Branch, Isa. 4:2; 11:5; 53:2; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12

The NT takes these scattered references about God's special redemptive agent and clarifies and develops them into an understanding of Jesus as God's Promised Coming One (e.g., Matt. 16:13-20; John 11:25-27). The two comings of the Messiah are the means by which these diverse functions and titles are united.

For a good discussion of the distinction in the Gospels between Son of Man as authority figure versus Suffering Servant, see George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 149-158.

2:3 This verse has two COHORTATIVES.

1. let us tear – BDB 683, KB 736, *Piel* COHORTATIVE, cf. Jer. 5:5
2. let us cast away – BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE

Fallen humans (individuals and corporate groups) want independence from their Creator (cf. Genesis 3).

The terms “fettters” (BDB 64) and “cords” (BDB 721) refer to things that bind prisoners (here, vassals). They (like all fallen humans) saw YHWH's law as restricting their freedom, while in reality, His law is designed to keep us safe, happy, and productive in a fallen world. The laws are the loving guidelines of a parent, providing guidance and wisdom!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:4-6

**⁴He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them.
⁵Then He will speak to them in His anger
And terrify them in His fury, saying,
⁶“But as for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”**

2:4-6 This describes YHWH's thoughts and actions in response to the nations' uproar. This is anthropomorphic language.

1. sits
2. laughs (cf. Ps. 59:8; Pro. 1:26)
3. scoffs
4. speaks in anger

Can fallen, corporate humanity resist YHWH's will (i.e., Genesis 10-11)? No!

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN (ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE)

- I. This type of language is very common in the OT (some examples)
 - A. Physical body parts
 - 1. eyes – Gen. 1:4,31; 6:8; Exod. 33:17; Num. 14:14; Deut. 11:12; Zech. 4:10
 - 2. hands – Exod. 15:17; Num. 11:23; Deut. 2:15
 - 3. arm – Exod. 6:6; 15:16; Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 26:8
 - 4. ears – Num. 11:18; 1 Sam. 8:21; 2 Kgs. 19:16; Ps. 5:1; 10:17; 18:6
 - 5. face – Exod. 33:11; Num. 6:25; 12:8; Deut. 34:10
 - 6. finger – Exod. 8:19; 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3
 - 7. voice – Gen. 3:8,10; Exod. 15:26; 19:19; Deut. 26:17; 27:10
 - 8. feet – Exod. 24:10; Ezek. 43:7
 - 9. human form – Exod. 24:9-11; Ps. 47; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26
 - 10. the angel of the Lord – Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:4,13-21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
 - B. Physical actions
 - 1. speaking as the mechanism of creation – Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26
 - 2. walking (i.e., sound of) in Eden – Gen. 3:8; 18:33; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:14
 - 3. closing the door of Noah's ark – Gen. 7:16
 - 4. smelling sacrifices – Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18,25; Lev. 26:31
 - 5. coming down – Gen. 11:5; 18:21; Exod. 3:8; 19:11,18,20
 - 6. burying Moses – Deut. 34:6
 - C. Human emotions (some examples)
 - 1. regret/repent – Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; 1 Sam. 15:29,35; Amos 7:3,6
 - 2. anger – Exod. 4:14; 15:7; Num. 11:10; 12:9; 22:22; 25:3,4; 32:10,13,14; Deut. 6:15; 7:4; 29:20
 - 3. jealousy – Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16,21; Jos. 24:19
 - 4. loathe/abhor – Lev. 20:23; 26:30; Deut. 32:19
 - D. Family terms (some examples)
 - 1. father
 - a. of Israel – Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 31:9; Hos. 11:1
 - b. of the king – 2 Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 2:7
 - c. metaphors of fatherly action – Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 32:6-14; Ps. 27:10; Pro. 3:12; Jer. 3:4,22; 31:20; Hosea 11:1-4; Mal. 3:17
 - 2. parent – Hosea 11:1-4
 - 3. mother – Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13 (analogy to nursing mother)
 - 4. young faithful lover – Hosea 1-3
- II. Reasons for the use of this type of language
 - A. It is a necessity for God to reveal Himself to human beings. The very pervasive concept of God as male is an anthropomorphism because God is spirit!
 - B. God takes the most meaningful aspects of human life and uses them to reveal Himself to fallen humanity (father, mother, parent, lover).

- C. Though necessary at times (i.e., Gen. 3:8), God does not want to be limited to any physical form (cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5).
- D. The ultimate anthropomorphism is the incarnation of Jesus! God became physical, touchable (cf. 1 John 1:1-3). The message of God became the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-18).

2:4 “sits in the heavens” This refers to the place of God’s throne, where He reigns! For “heavens” see Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEAVEN

The Hebrew term (BDB 1029, translated “heaven,” “sky,” “firmament,” “air”) can refer to several things (i.e., a series of domes or spheres of creation):

1. In Gen.1:8-20 it refers to the atmosphere above the earth where clouds move and birds fly.
2. This dome (cf. Gen. 1:6,20; Isa. 40:22; 42:5) above the earth is where God sends the rain (i.e., “windows of heaven,” cf. Ps. 78:23-29; Mal. 3:10 or “the water jars of heaven,” cf. Job 38:37).
3. This dome is where the stars dwell and planets move (two dimensional). It could refer to all the created cosmos (tens of billions of galaxies).
4. Above this dome is the abode of God (i.e., the third or seventh heaven). It is the highest heaven (e.g., Deut. 10:14; 1 Kgs. 8:27,30,32; Ps. 2:4; 148:4; Isa. 66:1).
5. The theological emphases
 - a. God is the creator of everything.
 - b. He controls creation (i.e., light and dark, rain and drought).
 - c. He creates and places the heavenly lights (sun, moon, stars, planets, comets).
 - d. There are spheres or realms of reality:
 - 1) earth
 - 2) above the earth
 - 3) invisible/angelic (cf. Col. 1:16)
 - 4) God’s presence and abode
 - e. they are all connected and controlled by His will

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEAVENS

In the OT the term “heaven” is usually PLURAL (i.e., *shamayim*, BDB 1029). The Hebrew term means “height.” God dwells on high. This concept reflects the holiness and transcendence of God.

In Gen. 1:1 the PLURAL “heavens and earth” has been viewed as God creating (1) the atmosphere above this planet or (2) a way of referring to all of reality (i.e., spiritual and physical). From this basic understanding other texts were cited as referring to levels of heaven: “heaven of heavens” (cf. Ps. 68:33) or “heaven and the heaven of heavens” (cf. Deut. 10:14; 1 Kgs. 8:27; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 148:4). The rabbis surmised that there might be

1. two heavens (i.e., R. Judah, Hagigah 12b)
2. three heavens (Test. Levi 2-3; Ascen. of Isaiah 6-7; Midrash Tehillim on Ps. 114:1)

3. five heavens (III Baruch)
4. seven heavens (R. Simonb. Lakish; II Enoch 8; Ascen. of Isa. 9:7)
5. ten heavens (II Enoch 20:3b; 22:1)

All of these were meant to show God's separation from physical creation and/or His transcendence. The most common number of heavens in rabbinical Judaism was seven. A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud* (p. 30), says this was connected to the astronomical spheres, but I think it refers to seven being the perfect number (i.e., days of creation with seven representing God's rest in Genesis 1).

Paul, in 2 Cor. 12:2, mentions the "third" heaven (Greek *ouranos*) as a way of identifying God's personal, majestic presence. Paul had a personal encounter with God!

▣ **"laughs"** The VERB (BDB 965, KB 1315, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is a literary way of denoting YHWH's sovereignty. THE UBS *Handbook* (p. 26) has an insightful comment. "In Ps. 1:1 'scoffers' are people who make fun of God; here it is God who mocks the pagan rulers."

▣ **"Lord"** Verses 4a and 4b are parallel, so the Deity referred to is YHWH (cf. v. 2c). Here the word is not YHWH but *Adon* the Hebrew word for "owner," "husband," "lord." See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Ps. 1:1.

2:6 YHWH, in contradistinction to the idols who cannot see, hear, or act, installed (lit. "consecrated," BDB 651, KB 703, *Qal* PERFECT) His King! Israel's King acted as YHWH's representative.

Notice the use of the personal PRONOUN, "Me," "My" (twice). YHWH is personally present and active in the world, and especially with His covenant people.

▣ **"Zion, My holy mountain"** These both refer to Mount Moriah, the hill in Jerusalem on which the temple was built. Originally Zion referred to the hill on which the Jebusite fortress was built (i.e., Jerusalem encompassed seven hills). David conquered it and built his palace on this hill. Later it came to be a way to designate the entire city of Jerusalem.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:7-9

⁷**"I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:
He said to Me, 'You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
⁸Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,
And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession.
⁹You shall break them with a rod of iron,
You shall shatter them like earthenware."**

2:7-9 The speaker is the new King, here called YHWH's "Son" (cf. Heb. 1:2; 3:6; 5:8; 7:28).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SON OF GOD

This is one of the major NT titles for Jesus. It surely has divine connotations. It included Jesus as "the Son" or "My Son" and God addressed as "Father." It occurs in the NT over 124 times. Even Jesus' self-designation as "Son of Man" has a divine connotation from Dan. 7:13-14.

In the OT the designation “son” could refer to four specific groups.

- A. angels (usually in the PLURAL, cf. Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6; 2:1)
- B. the King of Israel (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; 89:26-27)
- C. the nation of Israel as a whole (cf. Exod. 4:22-23; Deut. 14:1; Hos. 11:1; Mal. 2:10)
- D. Israeli judges (cf. Ps. 82:6)

It is the second usage that is linked to Jesus. In this way “son of David” and “son of God” both relate to 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 2 and 89. In the OT “son of God” is never used specifically of the Messiah, except as the eschatological king as one of the “anointed offices” of Israel. However, in the Dead Sea Scrolls the title with Messianic implications is common (see specific references in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, p. 770). Also “Son of God” is a Messianic title in two interbiblical Jewish apocalyptic works (cf. II Esdras 7:28; 13:32,37,52; 14:9 and I Enoch 105:2).

Its NT background as it refers to Jesus is best summarized by several categories.

- 1. His pre-existence (cf. John 1:1-18)
- 2. His unique (virgin) birth (cf. Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:31-35)
- 3. His baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22. God’s voice from heaven unites the royal king of Psalm 2 with the suffering servant of Isaiah 53).
- 4. His satanic temptation (cf. Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12,13; Luke 4:1-13. He is tempted to doubt His sonship or at least to accomplish its purpose by different means than the cross).
- 5. His affirmation by unacceptable confessors
 - a. demons (cf. Mark 1:23-25; Luke 4:31-37,41; Mark 3:11-12; 5:7)
 - b. unbelievers (cf. Matt. 27:43; Mark 14:61; John 19:7)
- 6. His affirmation by His disciples
 - a. Matt. 14:33; 16:16
 - b. John 1:34,49; 6:69; 11:27
- 7. His self affirmation
 - a. Matthew 11:25-27
 - b. John 10:36
- 8. His use of the familial metaphor of God as Father
 - a. His use of *Abba* for God
 - 1) Mark 14:36
 - 2) Romans 8:15
 - 3) Galatians 4:6
 - b. His recurrent use of Father (*patēr*) to describe His relationship to deity

In summary, the title “Son of God” had great theological meaning for those who knew the OT and its promises and categories, but the NT writers were nervous about its use with Gentiles because of their pagan background of “the gods” taking women with the resulting offspring being “the titans” or “giants.”

2:7 “today I have begotten You” In a sense this phrase represents the divine promises of 2 Samuel 7 (cf. Ps. 89:26-27), where YHWH promises in figurative language to be a “father” to David’s royal descendants. “Today” would refer to the king’s coronation day. Note John H. Walton, *ANE Thought and the OT*, p. 89, footnote 19,

“the idea that procreation is related to role rather than to substance is evident even in the biblical statements like. . . (Ps. 2:7) in which the king is born to his royal position.”

Also note G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, p. 190. However, in this Psalm it is used of the Messiah (i.e., Jesus, cf. Matt. 3:17; Luke 3:22; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5), which caused some theological problems particularly in relation to “monotheism,” and later the NT heresy of adoptionism.

SPECIAL TOPIC: MONOTHEISM

The concept of “monotheism” (one and only one God), not just the “high god” of polytheism or the good god of Iranian dualism (Zoroastrianism), is unique to Israel (Abraham, 2000 B.C.). There is one rare exception briefly in Egypt (Amenhotep IV, also known as Akhenaten, 1367-1350 or 1386-1361 B.C.).

This concept is expressed in several phrases in the OT.

1. “no one like YHWH our *Elohim*,” Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 33:26; 1 Kgs. 8:23
2. “no other besides Him,” Deut. 4:35,39; 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:2; 2 Sam. 22:32; Isa. 45:21; 44:6,8; 45:6,21
3. “YHWH is one,” Deut. 6:4; Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 8:4,6; 1 Tim. 2:5; James 2:19
4. “none like thee,” 2 Sam. 7:22; Jer. 10:6
5. “Thou alone are God,” Ps. 86:10; Isa. 37:16
6. “Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me,” Isa. 43:10
7. “there is no other; besides Me. . .there is no other,” Isa. 45:5,6,22
8. “there is none else, no other God,” Isa. 45:14,18
9. “there is none except Me,” Isa. 45:21
10. “there is no other; . . .there is no one like Me,” Isa. 46:9

It must be admitted that this crucial doctrine has been revealed in progressive ways. The early statements could be understood as “henotheism” or practical monotheism (there are other gods, but only one God for us, cf. Exod. 15:11; 20:2-5; Deut. 3:28; 5:7; 6:4,14; 10:17; 32:12; 1 Kgs. 8:23; Ps. 83:18; 86:8; 136:1-2).

The first texts that begin to denote a singularity (philosophical monotheism) are early (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 4:35,39; 33:26). The full and complete claims are found in Isaiah 43-46 (cf. 43:11; 44:6,8; 45:7,14,18,22; 46:5,9).

The NT alludes to Deut. 6:4 in Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 8:4,6; Eph. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; and James 2:19. Jesus quotes it as the first commandment in Matt. 22:36-37; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27. The OT, as well as the NT, asserts the reality of other spiritual beings (demons, angels), but only one creator/redeemer God (YHWH, Gen. 1:1).

Biblical monotheism is characterized by

1. God is one and unique (ontology is assumed, not specified)
2. God is personal (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8)
3. God is ethical (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8-10)
4. God created humans in His image (Gen. 1:26-27) for fellowship (i.e., #2). He is a jealous God (cf. Exod. 20:2-3)

From the NT

1. God has three eternal, personal manifestations (see Special Topic: The Trinity at 8:11)
2. God is perfectly and completely revealed in Jesus (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 1:2-3)
3. God’s eternal plan for fallen humanity’s redemption is the sacrificial offering of His only Son (Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:6-11; Hebrews)

The theological issue is “Is the Messianic king pre-existent deity” or a created being (cf. Pro. 8:22-31; Rom. 1:4)? John 1:1-3 answers this issue. It is so important that I have included my notes from John 1:1-3.

John 1

1:1 “In the beginning” This reflects Genesis 1:1 and is also used in 1 John 1:1 as a reference to the incarnation. It is possible that 1 John was a cover letter to the Gospel. Both deal with Gnosticism. Verses 1-5 are an affirmation of Jesus Christ’s divine pre-existence before creation (cf. 1:15; 8:56-59; 16:28; 17:5; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; 10:5-8).

The NT is described as

1. a new creation, not marred by the Fall (i.e., Gen. 3:15 fulfilled for mankind)
2. a new conquest (Promised Land)
3. a new exodus (fulfilled prophecy)
4. a new Moses (law giver)
5. a new Joshua (cf. Heb. 4:8)
6. a new water miracle (cf. Hebrews 3-4)
7. new manna (cf. John 6)

and so many more, especially in Hebrews.

▣ **“was”** (thrice) This is an IMPERFECT TENSE (cf. vv. 1,2,4,10) which focuses on continual existence in past time. This TENSE is used to show the Logos’ pre-existence (cf. 8:57-58; 17:5,24; 2 Cor. 8:9; Col. 1:17; Heb. 10:5-7). It is contrasted with the AORIST TENSES of vv. 3, 6, and 14.

▣ **“the Word”** The Greek term *logos* referred to a message, not just a single word. In this context it is a title which the Greeks used to describe “world reason” and the Hebrews as analogous with “Wisdom.” John chose this term to assert that God’s Word is both a person and a message. See Contextual Insights, C.

▣ **“with God”** “With” could be paraphrased “face to face.” It depicts intimate fellowship. It also points toward the concept of one divine essence and three personal eternal manifestations (see Special Topic: The Trinity at John 14:26). The NT asserts the paradox that Jesus is separate from the Father, but also that He is one with the Father.

▣ **“the Word was God”** This VERB is IMPERFECT TENSE as in v. 1a. There is no ARTICLE (which identifies the SUBJECT, see F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 66) with *Theos*, but *Theos* is placed first in the Greek phrase for emphasis. This verse and v. 18 are strong statements of the full deity of the pre-existent Logos (cf. 5:18; 8:58; 10:30; 14:9; 17:11; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1). Jesus is fully divine as well as fully human (cf. 1 John 4:1-3). He is not the same as God the Father, but He is the very same divine essence as the Father.

The NT asserts the full deity of Jesus of Nazareth, but protects the distinct personhood of the Father. The one divine essence is emphasized in John 1:1; 5:18; 10:30,34-38; 14:9-10; and 20:28, while their distinctives are emphasized in John 1:2,14,18; 5:19-23; 8:28; 10:25,29; 14:11,12,13,16.

1:2 This is parallel to v. 1 and emphasizes again the shocking truth in light of monotheism that Jesus, who was born around 6-5 B.C., has always been with the Father and, therefore, is Deity.

1:3 “All things came into being through Him” The Logos was the Father’s agent of creation of both the visible and the invisible (cf. v. 10; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). This is similar to the role wisdom plays in Ps. 33:6 and Pro. 8:12-23 (in Hebrews “wisdom” is a FEMININE gender NOUN).

▣ **“apart from Him nothing came into being”** This is a refutation of the Gnostic false teaching of angelic aeons between the high, good god and a lesser spiritual being that formed, pre-existent matter (see Contextual Insights, D).

It must be noted that the “Father. . .son” imagery is a figurative way to show a personal relationship (cf. Deut. 32:18). The human family is an easily understood way to symbolize this fellowship. This same truth is also part of the Hebrew concept of “know.” See Special Topic: Know at Ps. 1:6.

2:8 The reign of the Messiah will be universal (cf. Ps. 67:7; Isa. 45:22; 52:10; Jer. 16:19; Micah 5:4, see Special Topic: Land, Country, Earth at Ps. 1:2). This is God’s world. It was created as a platform for God and the creatures made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) for fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:8). The rebellion of Adam

and Eve (cf. Genesis 3) damaged the image of God in mankind and negatively affected physical creation (cf. Rom. 8:18-25). This is not the world that God intended it to be! However, He has refused to give up on mankind. He revealed Himself through Israel and sent His Son (cf. Gen. 3:15) to restore creation to its intended purpose. The Bible starts with God and mankind in a garden setting (cf. Genesis 1-3; Ps. 1:3) and it concludes with God and mankind in a garden setting (cf. Revelation 21-22). Everything between Genesis 3 and Revelation 21-22 is God cleaning up the mess!

▣ **“inheritance. . .possession”** Both of these words have theological significance to God’s gift, to His covenant people. The first is often especially related to the Levites. The second is a promise to the descendants of Abraham (cf. Gen. 17:8; 48:4; Lev. 25:34).

2:9 “You will break them with a rod of iron” The Hebrew VERB (BDB 949, KB 1270, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is from the root רעע, but the LXX and Peshitta read it as “rule” or “shepherd,” רעה (BDB 944). The early church used the LXX and this is how the phrase is used in Rev. 2:27; 12:5 and 19:15.

However, the parallelism with the next line of Hebrew poetry (i.e., “shatter” – BDB 658, KB 711, *Piel* IMPERFECT) favors “break.”

▣ **“rod”** The NOUN (BDB 986) can mean “rod,” “staff,” or “scepter.” The last option seems best in the royal context (cf. Ps. 45:6; 125:3; Num. 24:17; Isa. 14:5; Ezek. 19:11,14; Zech. 10:11). Although if “shepherd” is correct, then it would be “staff” (cf. Ps. 23:4; Micah 7:14).

▣ **“You will shatter them like earthenware”** The breaking of a clay vessel was an ANE visual symbol of judgment.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:10-12

¹⁰Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;

Take warning, O judges of the earth.

¹¹Worship the LORD with reverence

And rejoice with trembling.

¹²Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way,

For His wrath may soon be kindled.

How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

2:10-12 Notice the series of IMPERATIVES as the psalmist (i.e., David, cf. Acts 4:25), speaking for YHWH, warns the rulers of this world to prepare to meet Him (cf. Pro. 8:12-21).

1. show discernment – BDB 968, KB 1328, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. take warning – BDB 415, KB 418, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
3. worship the Lord – BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. rejoice with trembling – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. do homage to the Son (lit. “kiss”) – BDB 676, KB 730, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

2:12 “the Son” There is some doubt about this translation. The Hebrew word “son,” בן (BDB 61), is used in v. 7 but here the word is בור (BDB 135, i.e., the Aramaic word for “son,” cf. Pro. 31:2 [thrice]), which in Hebrew can mean “pure” (BDB 141 II, cf. Ps. 24:4; 73:1; Job 11:4; Pro. 14:4). The NRSV and NJB translate vv. 11a-12a as “with trembling kiss his feet.” The UBS Text Project (p. 164) gives “kiss the Son” a “B” rating (i.e., some doubt).

Some scholars have assumed that since vv. 11-12 are directed to surrounding pagan nations, there is a purposeful switch from the Hebrew “son” to the Aramaic “son.” The general thrust of “submission” is clear even if the linguistic details are not!

▣ **“you perish *in the way*”** One wonders if it is by accident that both the words “perish” (BDB 1, KB 2) and “way” (BDB 202) are used in Psalm 1. Biblical faith is a daily relationship with YHWH and His Messiah. Jesus may surely have used Psalm 1 and 2 as an outline in Matthew 5-7, esp. 7:13,21-23,26-27.

▣ **“How blessed are all who take refuge in Him”** The last line of Psalm 2 links to the first line of Psalm 1, possibly a literary technique called *inclusio*. Thereby, Psalm 1– Psalm 2 comprise one literary unit (cf. Acts 13:33). The Talmud suggests that Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 form one psalm (cf. b. Ber. 9b-10a). Blessed is the true believer who reverences YHWH and obeys His revelation! Faith and faithfulness must go together. Justification and sanctification cannot be separated!

Notice that both Ps. 1:1 and 2:12 accentuate human choices and activities. Biblical faith is a life journey of trust and obedience.

YHWH is described in several metaphors as a place of safety, security, and rest. We can trust/take refuge in

1. a rock – Deut. 32:37; 2 Sam. 22:2,3; Ps. 18:2
2. a fortress – 2 Sam. 22:2; Ps. 144:2
3. a stronghold – Ps. 18:2; 62:2; 144:2
4. a deliverer – 2 Sam. 22:2; Ps. 144:2
5. a shield – Gen. 15:1; 2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 3:3; 18:2; 144:2; Pro. 30:5
6. a horn of salvation – 2 Sam. 22:26; Ps. 18:2; 75:10
7. a mother bird – Ps. 17:8; 36:7 (also note Deut. 32:10-11); 57:1; 63:7; 91:4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is this Psalm considered Messianic?
2. Are the nations local or worldwide?
3. Define “Anointed” in verse 2.
4. Are “His Anointed” and My Son the same person?
5. If this refers to Jesus does verse 7 imply he was created?

PSALM 3

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Morning Prayer of Trust in God <u>MT Intro</u> “A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son” (cf. II Samuel 15-16)	The LORD Helps His Troubled People	Prayer For Deliverance From Personal enemies (A Lament)	Morning Prayer for Help	Morning Prayer of the Upright in Persecution
3:1-2	3:1-2	3:1-2	3:1-2	3:1-2
3:3-6	3:3-4	3:3-4	3:3-4	3:3-4
	3:5-6	3:5-6	3:5-6	3:5-6
3:7-8	3:7-8	3:7	3:7-8	3:7-8
		3:8		

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-2

¹**O LORD, how my adversaries have increased!**

Many are rising up against me.

²**Many are saying of my soul,**

“There is no deliverance for him in God.”

Selah.

3:1-2 The psalmist felt trapped/surrounded by adversaries (BDB 865 III).

1. they have increased (cf. v. 6)

2. they are rising up
3. they are saying

Notice the threefold use of “many” (BDB 912 I). Even for the righteous God-fearer there are problems (real and imagined) in this fallen world. The Psalms want to give the reader a faith worldview (i.e., the eyes of faith, cf. 2 Kgs. 6:17). The remainder of the psalm describes YHWH’s presence and care!

One wonders how these laments work in

1. our day
2. our faith groups

Are those who disagree with us enemies of God? I think it best to use the psalms as words of encouragement to faith/trust in God and not as an attack on all who disagree with me! The true enemies are those who reject our God and His Christ!

3:2 “my soul” This is the Hebrew word *nephesh* (BDB 659, KB 711-713), which denotes an air-breathing animal (i.e., related to the Hebrew word for breath and spirit). It is used of mankind (cf. Gen. 2:7) and cattle (cf. Gen. 1:24; 2:19).

Humans are both a part of this creation and created in the image and likeness of the Creator (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). We have both a physical component and a spiritual component.

▣ **“Selah”** Notice this term is placed in the margin, apparently for the choir director, in Ps. 3:2,4,8. The root is not certain. Here are some of the theories.

1. from Persian root for “song”
2. from Hebrew סָלַל (BDB 699) “to lift up,” i.e., a higher pitch
3. from Hebrew נָצַח (BDB 663) meaning “always,” functioning like “amen”
4. from LXX denoting an interlude of instruments

With all these theories it is obvious that moderns do not know what it refers to in the Psalter. It is used over 70 times in the MT and over 90 times in the LXX. See Intro. to Psalms, VIII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:3-6

³**But You, O LORD, are a shield about me,
My glory, and the One who lifts my head.**
⁴**I was crying to the LORD with my voice,
And He answered me from His holy mountain. Selah.**
⁵**I lay down and slept;
I awoke, for the LORD sustains me.**
⁶**I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people
Who have set themselves against me round about.**

3:3-6 “O LORD” See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Ps. 1:1.

▣ **“You. . .are”** The psalmist enumerates in powerful imagery the person and work of YHWH for the believer.

1. a shield, v. 3 – Gen. 15:1; Deut. 33:29; 2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 28:7; 33:20; 59:11; 84:11; 115:9,10,11; 119:114; 144:2 (also note 1 Pet. 1:5)
2. my glory, v. 3 – Ps. 62:7
 - a. honor
 - b. victory (cf. TEV)

3. lifts my head, v. 3
 - a. victory in battle
 - b. recognition by the judge in court
 - c. deliverance from death
4. answers my prayers, v. 4
5. sustains me, v. 5
6. causes me not to have fear, v. 6

3:4 “I was crying to the LORD” This prayer for help may be Ps. 3:7a. The consequences of “He answered me” are seen in 3:7b-8.

▣ “from His holy mountain” This refers to the temple, where in OT imagery, YHWH dwelt between the wings of the *Cherubim* over the ark of the covenant. This was the place where heaven and earth (the spiritual and physical) met!

3:5 Sleep is possible because of YHWH’s presence, peace, and protection (cf. Ps. 4:8; Pro. 3:24). Psalm 3:5a is an idiom for a restful night’s sleep! This is possible because of one’s faith and trust in YHWH, His presence, His promises, His character!

3:6 This is hyperbolic, idiomatic language. The term “ten thousand” (BDB 914) is an idiom for an innumerable host. The PLURAL (as here) intensifies this (cf. Deut. 33:2,17; 1 Sam. 18:7; Micah 6:7).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:7-8

⁷Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God!
 For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek;
 You have shattered the teeth of the wicked.
⁸Salvation belongs to the LORD;
 Your blessing upon Your people! Selah.

3:7 This verse begins with two IMPERATIVES (i.e., prayer requests).

1. arise – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE used in the sense of entreating YHWH to act, cf. Num. 10:35; Ps. 7:6; 9:19; 10:12; 44:26; 68:1; 74:22; 82:8; 132:8; as enemies “arose,” now the palmist calls on YHWH to rise up (i.e., from His throne)!
2. save – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, which in the OT, denotes deliverance from the trials, pains, issues of this life (Ps. 3:8)

SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION (OT Term)

This term (BDB 447) has several connotations.

1. welfare, prosperity, Job 30:15
2. divine salvation which encompasses both physical and spiritual aspects
 - a. Gen. 49:18
 - b. Deut. 32:15
 - c. Ps. 3:2,8; 22:1; 35:3; 62:2; 69:29; 70:5; 78:22; 80:3; 89:26; 91:16; 106:4; 140:7
 - d. Isa. 12:2; 33:2; 51:6,8; 52:7,10; 56:1; 59:11; 60:18; 62:1

3. the idea of physical and spiritual deliverance is clearly present in Jonah 2:9-10
 4. often “rejoicing” is related to YHWH’s salvation, 1 Sam. 2:1; Isa. 25:9; 26:1; Ps. 9:14; 13:5; 35:9
- Salvation involves the implementation of YHWH’s original intended fellowship and society with His human creatures. It involves individual and societal wholeness!

▣ **“has smitten. . .has shattered”** YHWH brings deliverance by forcefully dealing with the psalmist’s adversaries.

1. has smitten – BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* PERFECT
2. has shattered – BDB 990, KB 1402, *Piel* PERFECT

The “cheek” (BDB 534 I) and “teeth” 9BDB 1042 I) are idioms of shame and defeat (cf. 1 Kgs. 22:24; Job 16:10; Ps. 58:6; Micah 5:1). It specifically refers to their hateful words (cf. v. 2).

3:8 There are no VERBS in Ps. 3:8. Often the biblical Hebrew “to be” VERB is supplied by the reader.

▣ **“Selah”** See notes at Psalm 3:2.

3:9 Notice how an individual lament is used to reflect a corporate concern (i.e., “Thy people,” of v. 9; Ps. 25:22; 28:9). YHWH brings salvation/deliverance, not only to individuals who ask but to the nation who asks (i.e., 2 Chr. 7:14).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who are the adversaries?
2. Why are they denying YHWH’s deliverance?
3. What does the IMPERATIVE “arise” mean?
What are its possible backgrounds
4. What does “Selah” mean?

PSALM 4

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Evening Prayer of Trust in God <u>MT Intro</u> “For the choir director; on stringed instruments, a Psalm of David”	The Safety of the Faithful	Prayer For Deliverance From Personal Enemies (a Lament)	Evening Prayer for Help	Evening Prayer
4:1	4:1	4:1	4:1	4:1
4:2-3	4:2-3	4:2	4:2	4:2
		4:3	4:3	4:3
4:4-5	4:4-5	4:4-5	4:4-5	4:4
				4:5
4:6-8	4:6-8	4:6-7	4:6-7	4:6
				4:7
		4:8	4:8	4:8

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BRIEF OUTLINE

- A. Opening prayer to God, v. 1
- B. Address to opponents, vv. 2-3

C. Commands for an appropriate response to God, vv. 4-5

D. Closing prayer to God, vv. 6-8

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1

**¹Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have relieved me in my distress;
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.**

4:1 Notice the IMPERATIVES used to implore God.

1. answer me – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 27:7
2. be gracious to me – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 25:16; 69:16
3. hear my prayer – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 17:6; 39:12

The psalmist expects God to hear and act (cf. Ps. 3:4; 6:8,9; 17:6; 86:7)! Prayer is not only request, it is fellowship! We need Him even more than our answered requests!

▣ Notice how the psalmist characterizes God.

1. O God of my righteousness (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5)
2. O God, reliver of my distress

There are so many personal PRONOUNS in these first two verses! YHWH is the only source of “righteousness,” which brings peace (both physically and spiritually)!



NASB, NKJV	“relieved me”
NRSV, LXX	“gave me room”
NJB	“set me at large”
JPSOA, REB	“freed me”

The Hebrew word (BDB 931, KB 1210, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is an idiom for a wide space (cf. Ps. 18:19), the opposite of “restriction” (i.e., oppression, tribulation, narrow straights, BDB 865, “distress”). Its metaphorical nature can be seen in Gen. 26:22; Deut. 33:20; Ps. 25:17; Isa. 54:2; 57:8.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:2-3

**²O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach?
How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception?
Selah.
³But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself;
The LORD hears when I call to Him.**

4:2 The author develops the antagonistic setting by two questions directed to those who oppose.

1. reproach/shame – BDB 484
2. worthless/vain words – BDB 938
3. deception/lies – BDB 469

As God is called “my righteousness” in Ps. 4:1, now He is called on to reveal the attitude, motives, and actions of those who would do the psalmist harm.



NASB “my honor become a reproach”

NKJV “my glory to shame”

NJB “heavy of heart”

The NJB follows the LXX, which apparently translated a different Hebrew text than the MT. The UBS Text Project (p. 165) gives the MT a “C” rating (considerable doubt).

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Psalm 3:2.

4:3 How should the opponents respond to the psalmist’s questions of v. 2?

1. know (*Qal* IMPERATIVE) that the Lord has set apart (LXX, “has done wondrous things for His holy one,” cf. NJB, NEB) the godly man for Himself (UBS Text Project gives an “A” rating [very high probability])
2. the Lord hears the godly man (BDB 339) when he prays

YHWH knows and responds to His true followers. An attack on them is an attack on Him!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:4-5

⁴**Tremble, and do not sin;**

Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still.

Selah.

⁵**Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,**

And trust in the LORD.

4:4-5 There is a series of commands whereby the psalmist suggests how his opponents (i.e., “sons of men,” v. 2) should live.

1. tremble – BDB 919, KB 1182, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. do not sin – BDB 306, KB 305, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. meditate (lit. speak) – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 77:6
4. be still – BDB 198, KB 226, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. offer sacrifices – BDB 256, KB 261, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. trust in YHWH – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 37:3; 62:8

4:4 Number 2 above is quoted by Paul in Eph. 4:26 in combination with Deut. 24:15, as “be angry, and *yet* do not sin,” which is from the LXX. The MT has “tremble” which denotes “fear” (cf. Isa. 32:11; Micah 7:17; Hab. 3:16), not anger.

▣ **“be still”** The word (BDB 198, KB 226) has several usages.

1. fear in battle – Exod. 15:14-16
2. speechless in judgment – 2 Sam. 2:9
3. silence in death – Ps. 31:17; 94:17; Jer. 48:2; 49:26
4. shocked silence at destruction – Jer. 25:37
5. silence of wisdom in an appropriate moment – Ps. 4:4; 62:5; 131:2; Amos 5:13

▣ **“Selah”** See notes at Psalm 3:2.

4:5 “trust in the Lord” This is a recurrent theme (BDB 105, KB 120).

1. a call to sinners – Ps. 4:5

2. a call to the faithful – Ps. 9:10; 32:10; 37:3,5; 40:3; 55:23; 56:4,11; 84:12; 91:2; 112:7; 115:11; 125:1; 143:8; Pro. 16:20; 29:25; Isa. 26:3-4
3. the king – Ps. 21:7; 25:2; 26:1; 28:7
4. the fathers – Ps. 22:4-5
5. O people – Ps. 62:8; 115:9
6. priests – Ps. 115:10

It is trust in YHWH and His word that brings hope (cf. v. 3), joy (cf. v. 7), and peace (cf. v. 8) in this fallen world.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:6-8

⁶Many are saying, “Who will show us *any* good?”

Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O LORD!

⁷You have put gladness in my heart,

More than when their grain and new wine abound.

⁸In peace I will both lie down and sleep,

For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety.

4:6-7 Like verse 2, verse 6 begins with a question which reflects the attitude, motives, and actions of the psalmist’s opponents.

The answer is the request (*Qal* IMPERATIVE) that YHWH “lift up the light of His countenance” (cf. Num. 6:26; Ps. 80:3,7,19). This is an idiom of Deity taking personal notice and extending mercy to His faithful (v. 5b) followers (cf. Ps. 27:1; Micah 7:8). YHWH has

1. put gladness in the psalmist’s heart
2. put peace in the psalmist’s heart
3. put safety in the psalmist’s heart

In Num. 6:26 the VERB “lift up,” is *נשא*, BDB 669, but here it is *נסה* (KB 702). Apparently they are two forms of one root (cf. BDB 650, KB 702, NET Bible, p. 853, #6).

4:7 “heart” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

The Greek term *kardia* is used in the Septuagint and NT to reflect the Hebrew term *lēb* (BDB 523). It is used in several ways (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 403-404).

1. the center of physical life, a metaphor for the person (cf. Acts 14:17; 2 Cor. 3:2-3; James 5:5)
2. the center of spiritual life (i.e., moral)
 - a. God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; 1 Cor. 14:25; 1 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23)
 - b. used of mankind’s spiritual life (cf. Matt. 15:18-19; 18:35; Rom. 6:17; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Pet. 1:22)
3. the center of the thought life (i.e., intellect, cf. Matt. 13:15; 24:48; Acts 7:23; 16:14; 28:27; Rom. 1:21; 10:6; 16:18; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:18; James 1:26; 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 18:7; heart is synonymous with mind in 2 Cor. 3:14-15 and Phil. 4:7)
4. the center of the volition (i.e., will, cf. Acts 5:4; 11:23; 1 Cor. 4:5; 7:37; 2 Cor. 9:7)
5. the center of the emotions (cf. Matt. 5:28; Acts 2:26,37; 7:54; 21:13; Rom. 1:24; 2 Cor. 2:4; 7:3; Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:7)

6. unique place of the Spirit's activity (cf. Rom. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6 [i.e., Christ in our hearts, Eph. 3:17])
7. The heart is a metaphorical way of referring to the entire person (cf. Matt. 22:37, quoting Deut. 6:5). The thoughts, motives, and actions attributed to the heart fully reveal the type of individual. The OT has some striking usages of the terms
 - a. Gen. 6:6; 8:21, "God was grieved to His heart," also notice Hosea 11:8-9
 - b. Deut. 4:29; 6:5, "with all your heart and all your soul"
 - c. Deut. 10:16, "uncircumcised heart" and Rom. 2:29
 - d. Ezek. 18:31-32, "a new heart"
 - e. Ezek. 36:26, "a new heart" vs. "a heart of stone"

▣ **"new grain"** *The UBS Handbook* (p. 47) mentions that the Hebrew MSS found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as the LXX and Vulgate, add "and olive oil" after "grain" and before "new wine," which may come from Deut. 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 14:23; 18:4; 28:51.

▣ **"new wine"** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL (FERMENTATION) AND ALCOHOLISM (ADDICTION)

I. Biblical Terms

A. Old Testament

1. *Yayin* – This is the general term for wine (BDB 406), which is used 141 times. The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.
2. *Tirosh* – This is "new wine" (BDB 440). Because of climatic conditions of the Near East, fermentation started as soon as six hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of fermenting. For some typical passages see Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.
3. *Asis* – This is obviously alcoholic beverages ("sweet wine," BDB 779, e.g., Joel 1:5; Isa. 49:26).
4. *Sekar* – This is the term "strong drink" (BDB 1016). The Hebrew root is used in the term "drunk" or "drunkard." It had something added to it to make it more intoxicating. It is parallel to *yayin* (cf. Pro. 20:1; 31:6; Isa. 28:7).

B. New Testament

1. *Oinos* – the Greek equivalent of *yayin*
2. *Neos oinos* (new wine) – the Greek equivalent of *tirosh* (cf. Mark 2:22).
3. *Gleuchos vinos* (sweet wine, *asis*) – wine in the early stages of fermentation (cf. Acts 2:13).

II. Biblical Usage

A. Old Testament

1. Wine is a gift of God (Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).

2. Wine is a part of a sacrificial offering (Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Deut. 14:26; Jdgs. 9:13).
3. Wine is used as medicine (2 Sam. 16:2; Pro. 31:6-7).
4. Wine can be a real problem (Noah – Gen. 9:21; Lot – Gen. 19:33,35; Nabal – 1 Sam. 25:36; Uriah – 2 Sam. 11:13; Amnon – 2 Sam. 13:28; Elah – 1 Kgs. 16:9; Benhadad – 1 Kgs. 20:12; Rulers – Amos 6:6; and Ladies – Amos 4).
5. Wine can be abused (Pro. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hosea 4:11).
6. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazarites, Numbers 6; and rulers, Pro. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hosea 7:5).
7. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).

B. Interbiblical

1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (Ecclesiasticus 31:27-30).
2. The rabbis say, “Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed.” (BB 58b).

C. New Testament

1. Jesus changed a large quantity of water into wine (John 2:1-11).
2. Jesus drank wine (Matt. 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff).
3. Peter accused of drunkenness on “new wine” at Pentecost (Acts 2:13).
4. Wine can be used as medicine (Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; 1 Tim. 5:23).
5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (1 Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; 1 Pet. 4:3).
6. Wine used in eschatological settings (Matt. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).
7. Drunkenness is deplored (Matt. 24:49; Luke 12:45; 21:34; 1 Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; 1 Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:13-14).

III. Theological Insight

A. Dialectical tension

1. Wine is a gift of God.
2. Drunkenness is a major problem.
3. Believers in some cultures must limit their freedoms for the sake of the gospel (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; 1 Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14).

B. Tendency to go beyond given bounds

1. God is the source of all good things.
2. Fallen mankind has abused all of God’s gifts by taking them beyond God-given bounds.

C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Mark 7:18-23; Rom. 14:14,20; 1 Cor. 10:25-26; 1 Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15).

IV. First Century Jewish Culture and Fermentation

- A. Fermentation begins very soon, approximately 6 hours after the grape is crushed.
- B. Jewish tradition says that when a slight foam appeared on the surface (sign of fermentation), it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7). It was called “new wine” or “sweet wine.”
- C. The primary violent fermentation was complete after one week.
- D. The secondary fermentation took about 40 days. At this state it is considered “aged wine” and could be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth* 6:1).

- E. Wine that had rested on its lees (old wine) was considered good, but had to be strained well before use.
- F. Wine was considered to be properly aged usually after one year of fermentation. Three years was the longest period of time that wine could be safely stored. It was called “old wine” and had to be diluted with water.
- G. Only in the last 100 years with a sterile environment and chemical additives has fermentation been postponed. The ancient world could not stop the natural process of fermentation.

V. Closing Statements

- A. Be sure your experience, theology, and biblical interpretation do not depreciate Jesus and first century Jewish/Christian culture! They were obviously not total-abstainers.
- B. I am not advocating the social use of alcohol. However, many have overstated the Bible’s position on this subject and now claim superior righteousness based on a cultural/denominational bias.
- C. For me, Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8-10 have provided insight and guidelines based on love and respect for fellow believers and the spread of the gospel in our cultures, not personal freedom or judgmental criticism. If the Bible is the only source for faith and practice, then maybe we must all rethink this issue.
- D. If we push total abstinence as God’s will, what do we imply about Jesus, as well as those modern cultures that regularly use wine (e.g., Europe, Israel, Argentina)?

4:8

NASB, NKJV

NRSV, REV,

NJB

“For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety”

NET, JPSOA (footnote)

“For You, O LORD, keep me alone and secure”

The word “alone” (BDB 94) can modify

1. the Lord
2. the faithful follower who sleeps alone (i.e., no enemies present)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who are “sons of men”? How are they characterized?
2. What are the different meanings of the Hebrew VERB “know”?
3. Explain verse 4 in your own words.
4. Who are the “many” in verse 6?

PSALM 5

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer For Protection From the Wicked <u>MT Intro</u> “For the choir director; for flute accompaniment. A Psalm of David”	A Prayer for Guidance	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies (a Lament)	A Prayer for Protection	Morning Prayer
5:1-3	5:1-3	5:1-3	5:1-3	5:1-2 5:3
5:4-7	5:4-6	5:4-6	5:4-6	5:4-5a 5:5b-6
	5:7-8	5:7-8	5:7-8	5:7
5:8-10				5:8
	5:9-10	5:9-10	5:9-10	5:9 5:10
5:11-12	5:11-12	5:11-12	5:11-12	5:11 5:12

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-3

¹Give ear to my words, O LORD,
Consider my groaning.

²Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God,
For to You I pray.

³In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice;
In the morning I will order *my* prayer to You and *eagerly* watch.

5:1-2 This prayer begins with three IMPERATIVES.

1. give ear to my words – BDB 24; KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. consider my groanings – BDB 106, KB 122, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (“groaning,” BDB 211, only here and Ps. 39:3, “musing”)
3. heed the sound of my cry – BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

These do not represent a fear on the psalmist’s part that God will not hear, but Hebrew parallelism.

5:1 “O LORD” Notice the parallelism of titles.

1. O LORD (YHWH, cf. Exod. 3:14)
2. my King (the terminology comes from 1 Sam. 8:7, cf. Ps. 84:3, the rabbis later call YHWH “the King of the universe”)
3. my God (see note below)

For #3 there are several forms of the term “God/god.” A good example is Deuteronomy 32.

1. vv. 3,15 – אֱלֹהִים (*Eloah*, BDB 42-43, cf. Ps. 5:2)
2. vv. 4,18,21 – אֵל (*El*, BDB 41-42, cf. Ps. 5:4)
3. v. 17 – אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*, BDB 43-44, cf. Ps. 5:10)

All are based on *El*, which denotes power and strength. In poetry all are used interchangeably.

5:3 This Psalm denotes a morning prayer. For post-exilic Jews there were several set times a day when prayers were offered.

1. at the time of the morning sacrifice, about 9 a.m. (possibly alluded to in Ps. 46:5b)
2. at noon
3. at the time of the evening sacrifice, about 3 p.m.

This faithful follower structured his day around times with God. He believed God heard and would respond (i.e., “*eagerly* watch,” v. 3b, BDB 859 I, KB 1044, *Piel* IMPERFECT).

The daily sacrifices in the tabernacle (cf. Exod. 29:38-42), and later temple, occurred every morning and evening. They were called “The Continual.” These were special times to draw near to YHWH.



NASB “I will order”

NKJV “I will direct”

NRSV “I will plead”

TEV “I will offer”

NJB “I will lay”

LXX “I will present”

This VERB (BDB 789, KB 884, *Qal* IMPERFECT) has a wide semantic field but basically means “to arrange something.” Here it could be (1) words or (2) sacrifice.

▣ **“eagerly watch”** This VERB (BDB 859, KB 1044, *Piel* IMPERFECT) denotes expectant waiting for something, here for YHWH to respond to the psalmist’s prayer (cf. Lam. 4:17; Micah 7:7; Hab. 2:1).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:4-7

**⁴For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness;
No evil dwells with You.**

**⁵The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes;
You hate all who do iniquity.**

**⁶You destroy those who speak falsehood;
The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit.**

**⁷But as for me, by Your abundant lovingkindness I will enter Your house,
At Your holy temple I will bow in reverence for You.**

5:4-6 The psalmist describes God (*El*, לֵא, see note at 5:1).

1. not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness
2. no evil dwells (permanent abode) with You (I think James 1:17 is a theological parallel)
3. the boastful will not stand before Your eyes (cf. Ps. 1:5)
4. You hate all who do iniquity
5. You destroy those who speak falsehood
6. You abhor the man of bloodshed and deceit

5:5 “You hate” This is shocking to us—that YHWH, the Creator, the desirer of fellowship with all humans, “hates” (BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* PERFECT). The Bible uses human terms to describe deity. This always causes tensions. See the Special Topic at Ps. 2:4-6 on anthropomorphisms.

His love for those “made in His image” (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) causes the opposite reaction when they treat each other in destructive ways!

5:7 In contrast to the faithless follower, the psalmist knows that because of YHWH’s “abundant lovingkindness” (cf. Ps. 6:4b), he will worship Him in the tabernacle/temple in reverence.

The term “lovingkindness” is the NASB’s way of translating the powerful covenant term *hesed* (BDB 338).

SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS (*HESED*)

This term has a wide semantic field. The BDB characterizes it this way (338-339).

A. Used in connection to human beings

1. kindness to fellow men (e.g., 1 Sam. 20:14; 2 Chr. 24:22)
2. kindness toward the poor and needy (e.g., Micah 6:8)
3. affection (cf. Jer. 2:2; Hos. 6:4)
4. appearance (cf. Isa. 40:6)

B. Used in connection to God

1. covenant loyalty and love
 - a. “in redemption from enemies and troubles” (e.g., Jer. 31:3; Ezra 7:28; 9:9)
 - b. “in preservation of life from death” (e.g., Job 10:12; Ps. 86:13)
 - c. “in quickening of spiritual life” (e.g., Ps. 119:41,76,88,124,149,159)

- d. “in redemption from sin” (cf. Ps. 25:7; 51:1)
- e. “in keeping the covenants” (e.g., 2 Chr. 6:14; Neh. 1:5; 9:32)
- 2. describes a divine attribute (e.g., Exod. 34:6; Micah 7:20)
- 3. kindness of God
 - a. “abundant” (e.g., Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8)
 - b. “great in extent” (e.g., Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9)
 - c. “everlasting” (e.g., 1 Chr. 16:34,41; 2 Chr. 5:13; 7:3,6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11)
- 4. deeds of kindness (e.g., 2 Chr. 6:42; Ps. 89:2; Isa. 55:3; 63:7; Lam. 3:22)

▣ **“temple”** There was no temple in David’s day! But the same term (BDB 228) is used in 1 Sam.1:9 and 3:3 for the tabernacle.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:8-10

⁸**O LORD, lead me in Your righteousness because of my foes;
Make Your way straight before me.**

⁹**There is nothing reliable in what they say;
Their inward part is destruction *itself*.
Their throat is an open grave;
They flatter with their tongue.**

¹⁰**Hold them guilty, O God;
By their own devices let them fall!
In the multitude of their transgressions thrust them out,
For they are rebellious against You.**

5:8 This is the content of the psalmist’s prayer mentioned in vv. 1-2.

- 1. lead (*Qal* IMPERATIVE) me in Your righteousness (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5)
- 2. make Your way straight/smooth (*Kethib* has *Hiphil*, while *Qere* has *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. NET Bible, p. 854, #4) before me (the terms “righteous” and “straight” are related theologically)

5:9 The psalmist is concerned about the words and deeds of his foes (“enemies,” v. 8, BDB 1004).

- 1. there is nothing reliable/true in what they say
- 2. their inward parts are destruction *itself*
- 3. their throat is an open grave
- 4. they flatter/smooth tongue (cf. Ps. 12:2)

Paul quotes this verse in his litany of OT texts which reflect the fallen nature of mankind in Rom. 3:10-18 (esp. v. 13).

5:10 The psalmist asks God to act against the enemies because of their words and deeds.

- 1. hold them guilty – BDB 79, KB 95, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (the opposite of justification)
- 2. by their own devices let them fall – BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
- 3. in the multitude of their transgressions thrust them out – BDB 623, KB 673, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (i.e., from YHWH’s personal presence at worship, Ps. 5:7 or at trial, Ps. 5:5)
- 4. for they are rebellious against You – BDB 598, KB 632, *Qal* PERFECT

Notice the different words the psalmist uses to describe his enemies.

1. wicked, v. 4
2. boastful, v. 5
3. doers of iniquity, v. 5
4. speak falsehood, v. 6
5. men of bloodshed, v. 6
6. men of deceit, v. 6
7. foes (i.e., those who lie in wait), v. 8
8. nothing reliable, v. 9
9. attitude of destruction, v. 9
10. liar, v. 9
11. transgressor, v. 10
12. rebellious, v. 10

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:11-12

**¹¹But let all who take refuge in You be glad,
Let them ever sing for joy;
And may You shelter them,
That those who love Your name may exult in You.
¹²For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O LORD,
You surround him with favor as with a shield.**

5:11-12 In contrast to the wicked enemy, the psalmist now describes the faithful followers (i.e., PLURALS, the prayer and experience of one became the description of all).

1. they take refuge in YHWH
2. they rejoice in YHWH
3. they take shelter in Him (I think this refers to a female bird metaphor, cf. Ruth 2:12; Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:1,4; see Special Topic below)
4. they love and exult in His name (see Special Topic below)

In light of this, YHWH

1. shelters them
2. blesses them
3. surrounds them as a shield (cf. 1 Sam. 23:26)

One can tell the difference between a faithful follower and a faithless follower by their fruit (cf. Matt. 7:15-22)!

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHADOW AS METAPHOR FOR PROTECTION AND CARE

The idiom of “shadow” was common in the ANE. Note the examples in the Bible.

1. idiom of protection, Isa. 16:3; 30:2-3; Lam. 4:20
2. idiom of “shadow of the hand,” Ps. 121:5; Isa. 49:2; 51:16
3. idiom of “shadow of the roof,” Gen. 19:8
4. idiom of “shadow of God’s special cloud,” cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19,20,24; Isaiah 4:6; 25:4-5; 32:1-2

5. idiom of “shadow of the wing,” Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:1,4 (similar metaphors in Deut. 32:10-11; Ruth 2:12; Isa. 31:5; Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34)
6. idiom of “shadow of a tree,” Jdgs. 9:15; Ezek. 17:23; 31:6,17; Dan. 4:12; Hosea 14:7

SPECIAL TOPIC: “THE NAME” OF YHWH

The use of “the name” as a substitute for YHWH Himself is parallel to the Exod. 23:20-33 use of “angel,” who is said to have “My name is in Him.” This same substitution can be seen in the use of “His glory” (e.g., John 1:14; 17:22). All are attempts to soften the personal anthropomorphic presence of YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:13-16; 6:3). YHWH is surely spoken of in human terms, but it was also known that He was spiritually present throughout creation (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 139:7-16; Jer. 23:24; Acts 7:49 quotes Isa. 66:1).

There are several examples of “the name” representing YHWH’s divine essence and personal presence.

1. Deut. 12:5; 2 Sam. 7:13; 1 Kgs. 9:3; 11:36
2. Deut. 28:58
3. Ps. 5:11; 7:17; 9:10; 33:21; 68:4; 91:14; 103:1; 105:3; 145:21
4. Isa. 48:9; 56:6
5. Ezek. 20:44; 36:21; 39:7
6. Amos 2:7
7. John 17:6,11,26

The concept of “calling on” (i.e., worshiping) the name of YHWH is seen early in Genesis.

1. 4:26, the line of Seth
2. 12:8, Abraham
3. 13:4, Abraham
4. 16:13, Hagar
5. 21:33, Abraham
6. 26:25, Isaac

and in Exodus:

1. 5:22-23, speak in Thy name
2. 9:16, show My name through all the earth (cf. Rom. 9:17)
3. 20:7, do not take the name of the LORD your God in vain (cf. Lev. 19:12; Deut. 5:11; 6:13; 10:20)
4. 20:24, where I cause My name to be remembered (cf. Deut. 12:5; 26:2)
5. 23:20-21, an angel (“since My name is in him”)
6. 34:5-7, Moses calls on (or “called out”) the name of the Lord. This is one of a handful of texts that describe YHWH’s character (cf. Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; Joel 2:13)

Knowing someone by name implies an intimacy (cf. Exod. 33:12); Moses knows YHWH’s name and in 33:17, YHWH knows Moses’ name. This is the context where Moses wants to see God’s glory (cf. Exod. 33:18), but God allows him to see “His goodness” (Exod. 33:19), which is parallel to “the name” (v. 19).

The Israelites are to destroy “the names” of Canaan’s gods (cf. Deut. 12:3) and call on Him (cf. Deut. 6:13; 10:20; 26:2) at the special place He causes His name to dwell (cf. Exod. 20:24; Deut. 12:5,11,21; 14:23,24; 16:2,6,11; 26:2).

YHWH has a universal purpose involving His name.

1. Gen. 12:3

2. Exod. 9:16
3. Exod. 19:5-6
4. Deut. 28:10,58
5. Micah 4:1-5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is Psalm 4 considered an evening Psalm and Psalm 5 a morning Psalm?
2. List the attributes of YHWH from verses 4-6.
3. The life of faith is described as a road/path/way. Why?
4. Describe the wicked from verses 4-6 and 9-10.

PSALM 6

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer For Mercy in Time of Trouble	A Prayer of Faith in Time of Distress	Prayer for Healing From a Severe Illness	A Prayer for Help in Time of Trouble	Supplication in Time of Trial
<u>MT Intro</u> “For the choir director; with stringed instruments, upon an eight-stringed lyre. A Psalm of David”				
6:1-3	6:1-3	6:1-3	6:1-3	6:1-3
6:4-5	6:4-5	6:4-5	6:4-5	6:4-5
6:6-7	6:6-7	6:6-7	6:6-7	6:6-8a
6:8-10	6:8-10	6:8-10	6:8-10	6:8b-10

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-3

- ¹O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger,
 Nor chasten me in Your wrath.
²Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I *am* pining away;
 Heal me, O LORD, for my bones are dismayed.
³And my soul is greatly dismayed;
 But You, O LORD—how long?

6:1 There are two IMPERATIVES used as JUSSIVES.

1. rebuke – BDB 406, KB 410, *Hiphil* negated, cf. Ps. 38:1
2. chasten – BDB 415, KB 418, *Piel* negated

This is a penitential psalm, as are Psalm 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. The Jewish Study Bible (p. 1289) says that this Psalm of supplication has become the liturgical weekday morning prayer of Jewish people.

▣ **“in Your anger. . .in Your wrath”** The psalm does not say why YHWH is angry. It may reflect the OT theology of one causation. The psalmist had enemies, YHWH allowed/sent them (cf. v. 3). Life’s circumstances are

1. punishment for sin (cf. Ps. 41:4)
2. life in a fallen world (cf. Ps. 147:3)
3. ways to strengthen faith (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13; Heb. 5:8)

However, one never knows which it is, so repent and have faith!

6:2-3 Notice how “dismayed” (BDB 96, KB 111, *Niphal* PERFECT) is related to both

1. my bones (BDB 782), v. 2
2. my soul (lit. *nephesh*, BDB 659, cf. v. 4), v. 3 (see full note at Ps. 3:2)

Both of these were ways of referring to a person’s innermost life and thoughts. This writer is in great distress and does not know why!

6:2 As verse 1 asks YHWH for what not to do, verse 2 asks YHWH to (also note v. 4)

1. be gracious to me – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. heal me – BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

The VERB “heal” does not necessarily relate to a physical illness (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1166, c, cf. Isa. 1:5-6), but to the attack of adversaries (cf. vv. 7b, 10). However, verse 2 leaves open the possibility of an illness. If an illness, why are adversaries mentioned? Some would say the enemies made fun of the psalmist (cf. Psalm 102:8) in his illness. The ancient Israelites believed sin and sickness were related.

6:3 “how long” This is the cry of the human person made in God’s image but trapped in a fallen mind, body, and world (cf. Ps. 13:1; 74:10; 90:13)! As believers we trust in God, not circumstances, but still we cry out—why? When will it be over?

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:4-5

**⁴Return, O LORD, rescue my soul;
Save me because of Your lovingkindness.
⁵For there is no mention of You in death;
In Sheol who will give You thanks?**

6:4 As Ps. 6:2 asks YHWH to act on the psalmist’s behalf (i.e., “be gracious. . .heal”), so too, verse 4.

1. return – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. rescue – BDB 322, KB 321, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. save – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

Notice the reason given for the requests is not the worth or merit of the psalmist but the unchanging, merciful character of the covenant creator/redeemer Deity!

One wonders what “return” in this context means. Did the psalmist think YHWH had departed or hid Himself?

▣ “lovingkindness” See Special Topic at Ps. 5:7.

6:5 Verse 5 gives the OT view of the afterlife. *Sheol* was a place of consciousness but no joy or praise. The whole issue of conscious existence beyond physical death is developed through Scripture. There are only hints in the OT (cf. Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27; Ps. 16:10; 49:15; 86:13; Isa. 25:8; 26:19; Ezek. 37:12-13; Dan. 12:1-2; Hos. 13:14). The full truth is revealed in 1 Corinthians 15!

The Hebrew *Sheol* (BDB 982) refers to the realm of the dead. It is characterized by

1. a dark, gloomy place, Job 10:21-22; Ps. 143:3
2. a place of no return, Job 10:21; 16:22
3. a place of no praise to God, Ps. 6:5; 30:9; 38:18; 88:10-12; 115:17 (silence, Ps. 94:17)
4. a place separated from God, Ps. 88:5; 39:13, yet God is there, Ps. 139:8; Pro. 15:11!

See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Ps. 1:6.

Notice the author specifically mentions that in his understanding of *Sheol*, there is no

1. remembrance (BDB 271)
2. praise (BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 30:9; 88:10-12; Isa. 38:18)

The *Tyndale OT Commentary Series* (vol. 15, p. 78) lists the imagery used in the OT for *Sheol*.

1. vast cavern – Ezek. 32:18-32
2. stronghold – Ps. 9:13; 107:18; Matt. 16:18
3. dark wasteland – Job 10:22
4. a huge beast with a large mouth – Isa. 5:14; Jonah 2:2; Hab. 2:5

Thank God for a New Testament!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:6-7

**⁶I am weary with my sighing;
Every night I make my bed swim,
I dissolve my couch with my tears.
⁷My eye has wasted away with grief;
It has become old because of all my adversaries.**

6:6-7 The psalmist describes his physical and emotional trauma caused by his “adversaries” (BDB 865, KB 1058, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, “those who show hostility”).

1. weary with sighing (BDB 58)
2. bed wet with tears (hyperbole)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:8-10

**⁸Depart from me, all you who do iniquity,
For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping.
⁹The LORD has heard my supplication,
The LORD receives my prayer.
¹⁰All my enemies will be ashamed and greatly dismayed;
They shall turn back, they will suddenly be ashamed.**

6:8-10 The psalmist comes to a place of mental relief as he trusted in YHWH, who has heard his prayer (cf. Ps. 28:6). This is expressed in three parallel lines (i.e., Ps. 6:8b, 9a, 9b).

Because of YHWH’s acceptance of the prayer the adversaries

1. must depart, v. 8a (cf. Ps. 119:115; 139:19)
2. will be ashamed, v. 10 (cf. Ps. 71:13,24)

3. will be greatly dismayed, Ps. 6:10 (same VERB used of the psalmist in Ps. 6:2b and 3a)
4. will turn back, v. 10 (same VERB used of YHWH in v. 4, but here may be of going into *Sheol*, cf. Job 34:15; Ps. 9:18; Eccl. 3:20; 5:15; 12:7)
5. will be suddenly ashamed (same VERB as v. 10a, cf. Ps. 73:19)

Numbers 2-5 are all IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense. The psalmist seeks the presence of YHWH but the absence of his foes! What they tried to do to him is now done to them! This literary structure (i.e., reversal) is typical of the OT. What humans expect is often opposite of what YHWH brings about.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe *Sheol* from an OT perspective.
2. Explain what “ashamed” means in an OT context.
3. How does the anger and wrath of YHWH relate to the wicked and to the faithful follower?

PSALM 7

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD Implored to Defend the Psalmist Against the Wicked <u>MT Intro</u> “A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning Cush, a Benjamite”	Prayer and Praise for Deliverance From Enemies	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer for Justice	Prayer of the Upright in Persecution
7:1-2	7:1-2	7:1-2	7:1-2	7:1-5
7:3-5	7:3-5	7:3-5	7:3-5	
7:6-11	7:6-8	7:6-8	7:6-9	7:6-8a 7:8b-9
	7:9-10	7:9-11		
	7:11-13		7:10-13	7:10-12a
7:12-16		7:12-16		
	7:14-16		7:14-16	7:12b-14 7:15-16
7:17	7:17	7:17	7:17	7:17

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-2

¹O LORD my God, in You I have taken refuge;
Save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me,
²Or he will tear my soul like a lion,
Dragging me away, while there is none to deliver.

7:1 “I have taken refuge” This VERB (BDB 340, KB 337) is a *Qal* PERFECT, which denotes a complete or settled action. The psalmist had and continued to seek refuge (i.e., protection, care, provision) with YHWH.

▣ The psalmist asks God to

1. save him – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. deliver him – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

because he has taken refuge in Him (BDB 340, KB 337, *Qal* PERFECT). This is a recurrent theme, cf. Ps. 2:12; 5:11; 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 17:7; 18:2,30; 25:20; 31:1,19; 34:8,22; 36:7; 37:40; 57:1; 61:4; 64:10; 71:1; 118:8,9; 141:8; 144:2. YHWH is the only true place of protection and rest!

7:2 In Ps. 7:1 the psalmist’s antagonists are called “those who pursue me.” In verse 2 they are described as a carnivorous animal (cf. Ps. 57:4).

1. tear – BDB 382, KB 380, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 17:12
2. drag away – BDB 830, KB 973, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
3. none can deliver – this is in contrast to v. 1, where the psalmist pleads for YHWH to deliver. No one but God can!

The psalmist is either using striking metaphors or is afraid of a violent physical attack by his enemies.

SPECIAL TOPIC: LIONS IN THE OT

Often an individual’s or nation’s power is described as being like a lion, the king of the predators.

1. Judah, Gen. 49:9; Micah 5:8
2. YHWH on Israel’s behalf, Num. 24:9; Isa. 31:4; 35:9; Hos. 11:10
3. Israel as a defeated lion, Ezekiel 19
4. tribe of Dan, Deut. 33:22
5. David’s power over lions, 1 Sam. 17:34-37
6. Saul and Jonathan, 2 Sam. 1:23
7. symbolic protectors of the throne of Solomon, 1 Kgs. 10:19-20
8. God uses lions as punishment, 1 Kgs. 13:20; 2 Kgs. 17:25-26; Isa. 15:9; metaphor in Job 4:10 and Jer. 2:30; 49:19,44; Lam. 3:10; Amos 3:4,8,12; 5:19; Hos. 5:14; 13:7-8; Nah. 2:11-12
9. describe David’s enemies from whom God will deliver, Ps. 7:2; 10:9; 17:12; 22:13,21
10. a metaphor for unknown evil, Pro. 22:13; 26:13; 28:15
11. used to describe Babylon’s military, Jer. 4:7; 49:19-22; 51:38
12. the military of the nations against God’s people, Jer. 5:6; 25:32-38; 50:17; Joel 1:6
13. how God’s people treat Him, Jer. 12:8
14. how God’s leaders treat the people, Ezek. 22:25; Zeph. 3:3

15. metaphor for king's anger, Pro. 19:12; 20:2
16. metaphor for the godly, Pro. 28:1;
17. metaphor for the Messiah, Gen. 49:9; Rev. 5:5

In light of usage #11 and 12 in Jeremiah, Daniel's metaphor of the Babylonian military as a fast moving lion is obvious. Empires of the Fertile Crescent often used lions to symbolize the nation (e.g., the winged lions on the Ishtar Gate of the city of Babylon).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:3-5

³**O LORD my God, if I have done this,
If there is injustice in my hands,
⁴If I have rewarded evil to my friend,
Or have plundered him who without cause was my adversary,
⁵Let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake *it*;
And let him trample my life down to the ground
And lay my glory in the dust.** **Selah.**

7:3-5 The psalmist sets up hypothetical parallel situations.

1. if I have done this (but "this" is not specified)
2. if there is injustice in my hands (i.e., actions, see Special Topic: Hand below)
3. if I have rewarded evil to my friend (this may be a well known proverb, cf. Pro. 20:22; 24:29; Rom. 12:17)
4. if I have plundered my friend without cause

If any of these things are true, then

1. let my enemy pursue me – BDB 922, KB 1191, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. let my enemy overtake me – BDB 673, KB 727, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE
3. let my enemy trample my life – BDB 942, KB 1245, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. I will lay my glory in the dust – BDB 1014, KB 1496, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE ("glory" in the sense of one's life essence, cf. Ps. 16:9; 30:12; 57:8; 108:1)

This is a poetic way of claiming innocence!

SPECIAL TOPIC: HAND (ILLUSTRATED FROM EZEKIEL)

The word "hand" (BDB 388) has several connotations and usages.

1. literal (i.e., hand of a human)
 - a. symbol of the entire person, Ezek. 3:18; 18:8,17; 33:6,8
 - b. symbol of human weakness, Ezek. 7:17,27; 21:7; 22:14
 - c. symbol of foreign enemies, Ezek. 7:21; 11:9; 16:39; 21:31; 23:9,28; 28:10; 30:12; 34:27; 38:12; 39:23
 - d. literal hand, Ezek. 8:11; 12:7; 16:11; 37:17,19,20
 - e. symbol of false leaders' power, Ezek. 13:21,22,23; 34:10
 - f. symbol of a nation, Ezek. 23:31,37,42,45; 25:14; 27:15; 28:9; 30:10,22,24,25; 31:11; 39:3

2. anthropomorphic of deity
 - a. reception of revelation, Ezek. 1:3; 3:14,22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1 (2:9 is another metaphor – scroll on a hand)
 - b. YHWH's power in judgment, Ezek. 6:14; 13:9; 14:9,13; 16:27; 20:33; 25:7,13,16; 35:3; 39:21
 - c. YHWH Himself (His personal Presence), Ezek. 20:22
 - d. YHWH's power to deliver, Ezek. 20:34 (possibly key usage from Exodus, cf. 3:20; 4:17; 6:1; 7:19; 13:3)
3. anthropomorphic of *Cherubim*, Ezek. 1:8; 8:3; 10:7,8,12,21
4. anthropomorphic of destroying angels, Ezek. 9:1-2; 21:11
5. symbol of a pledge or oath, Ezek. 17:18; 20:5(twice),6,15,23,28; 36:7; 44:12; 47:14
6. symbol of joy, Ezek. 25:6
7. anthropomorphic of an angel, Ezek. 40:3,5; 47:3

7:5 “Selah” See note at Ps. 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VIII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:6-11

⁶**Arise, O LORD, in Your anger;
Lift up Yourself against the rage of my adversaries,
And arouse Yourself for me; You have appointed judgment.**
⁷**Let the assembly of the peoples encompass You,
And over them return on high.**
⁸**The LORD judges the peoples;
Vindicate me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me.**
⁹**O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous;
For the righteous God tries the hearts and minds.**
¹⁰**My shield is with God,
Who saves the upright in heart.**
¹¹**God is a righteous judge,
And a God who has indignation every day.**

7:6-11 The psalmist calls on YHWH to act on his behalf.

1. arise – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (see note at Ps. 3:7). This VERB can mean
 - a. stand up and act on our behalf Judge/Warrior
 - b. wake up in the sense of “pay attention and act” (cf. Ps. 44:23)
2. lift up Yourself – BDB 669, KB 724, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
3. arouse Yourself – BDB 734, KB 802, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 35:23; 44:23; 59:4
4. return – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (or understood as “dwell,” BDB 442, cf. Ps. 23:6)
5. vindicate me – BDB 1047, KB 1622, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 26:1; 35:24; 43:1

YHWH is called on to allow His anger against sin to manifest itself in judgment. This thought is summarized in v. 7. The Hebrew is difficult.

JPSOA “let the assembly of peoples gather about You, with You enthroned on high”

NJB “let the assembly of nations gather around You; return above it on high”

The question is “How does ‘the peoples’ fit in this context of justice for an individual?” Does this psalm seek justice against

1. personal enemies (vv. 6,8)
2. the pagan nations (Obad. v. 5)

The fact that verse 8 begins with “The LORD judges the peoples” gives credence to option #2, but it is surprising in this context.

7:8 “according to my righteousness” This phrase must be interpreted in light of Ps. 7:3-5. The psalmist is not claiming sinlessness but that he had not done what he was accused of doing!

Notice verses 9, 17 where YHWH’s righteousness is affirmed. The psalmist is longing for the day when God will set all things straight, reveal the true motives and actions of all humans. The Bible is clear that this physical universe was created and maintained by a moral/ethical God. Each human made in His image will give an account to Him of the gift/stewardship of life (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15)!

▣ **“integrity”** This term (BDB 1070) means “innocence,” “blamelessness” (cf. Ps. 25:21; 26:1,11; 41:12; Pro. 2:7; 10:9; 19:1; 20:7; 28:6). It is not a claim to sinlessness but a claim to a pure mind/motive/heart (cf. v. 10b). See Special Topic at Ps. 18:20-24.

7:9 “the evil of the wicked” Does this refer to those who accuse the psalmist in Ps. 7:3-5 or all the peoples/nations (cf. Psalm 2)?

The psalmist calls on God to end evil (BDB 170, KB 197, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) and establish (BDB 465, KB 464, *Polel* IMPERFECT) righteousness (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5).

▣ **“for the righteous, God tries the heart and minds”** This is a recurrent theme (cf. Ps. 11:4-5; 17:3; 26:2; 66:10; 139:23; Jer. 11:20; 17:10; 20:12). God knows the motives of the heart (BDB 480, lit. kidneys; the lower viscera were seen as the seat of the emotions and moral character).

7:10-11 For the faithful follower, YHWH is a shield (see note at Ps. 3:3), but for the faithless follower He is a “righteous judge” (cf. Ps. 96:13).

7:11 “indignation” The VERB (BDB 276, KB 277, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) is found only here in the Psalms. It is found several times in Proverbs (cf. Ps. 22:14; 24:24; 25:23).

This verse describes YHWH’s (both *Elohim* and *El* are used in this verse for Deity) continual reaction against sin. This is not the world He intended it/created it to be. Genesis 3 has had a terrible effect on

1. God (cf. Hosea 11:1-4,8-9)
2. humans (cf. Rom. 3:10-18,23)
3. physical creation (cf. Rom. 8:18-23)

Sin affects time and eternity!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:12-16

¹²**If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword;
He has bent His bow and made it ready.**

¹³**He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons;
He makes His arrows fiery shafts.**

¹⁴**Behold, he travails with wickedness,
And he conceives mischief and brings forth falsehood.**

¹⁵He has dug a pit and hollowed it out,
And has fallen into the hole which he made.
¹⁶His mischief will return upon his own head,
And his violence will descend upon his own pate.

7:12 “If a man does not repent” Notice the conditional covenant. Also notice that repentance, like faith, is life long! See the Special Topics below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This concept is crucial but difficult to define. Most of us have a definition which comes from our denominational affiliation. However, usually a “set” theological definition is imposed on several Hebrew (and Greek) words which do not specifically imply this “set” definition. It must be remembered that NT authors (except Luke) were Hebrew thinkers using Koine Greek terms, so the place to start is the Hebrew terms themselves, of which there are primarily two.

1. *nhm* (BDB 636, KB 688)
2. *swb* (BDB 996, KB 1427)

The first, *nhm*, which originally seems to have meant to draw a deep breath, is used in several senses.

- a. “rest” or “comfort” (e.g., Gen. 5:29; 24:67; 27:42; 37:35; 38:12; 50:2; often used in names, cf. 2 Kgs. 15:14; 1 Chr. 4:19; Neh. 1:1; 7:7; Nahum 1:1)
- b. “grieved” (e.g., Gen. 6:6,7)
- c. “changed mind” (e.g., Exod. 13:17; 32:12,14; Num. 23:19)
- d. “compassion” (e.g., Deut. 32:36)

Notice that all of these involve deep emotion! Here is the key: deep feelings that lead to action. This change of action is often directed at other persons, but also toward God. It is this change of attitude and action toward God that infuses this term with such theological significance. But here care must be exercised. God is said to “repent” (cf. Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; 1 Sam. 15:11,35; Ps. 106:45), but this does not result from sorrow over sin or error, but a literary way of showing God’s compassion and care (cf. Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Ps. 110:4; Jer. 4:27-28; Ezek. 24:14). Due punishment for sin and rebellion is forgiven if the sinner truly turns away from his/her/their sin and turns to God.

This term has a wide semantical field. Context is crucial in determining its intended meaning.

The second term, *swb*, means “to turn” (turn from, turn back, turn to). If it is true that the two covenant requirements are “repentance” and “faith” (e.g., Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:4,15; 2:17; Luke 3:3,8; 5:32; 13:3,5; 15:7; 17:3), then *nhm* refers to the intense feelings of recognizing one’s sin and turning from it, while *swb* would refer to the turning from sin to the turning to God (one example of these two spiritual actions is Amos 4:6-11, “you have not returned to Me” [five times] and Amos 5:4,6,14, “seek Me. . .seek the Lord. . .seek good and not evil”).

The first great example of the power of repentance is David’s sin with Bathsheba (cf. 2 Samuel 12; Psalm 32,51). There were continuing consequences for David, his family, and Israel, but David was restored to fellowship with God! Even wicked Manasseh can repent and be forgiven (cf. 2 Chr. 33:12-13).

Both of these terms are used in parallel in Ps. 90:13. There must be a recognition of sin and a purposeful, personal turning from it, as well as a desire to seek God and His righteousness (cf. Isa. 1:16-20). Repentance has a cognitive aspect, a personal aspect, and a moral aspect. All three are required, both to start a new relationship with God and to maintain the new relationship. The deep emotion of regret turns into an abiding devotion to God and for God!

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSEVERANCE

The biblical doctrines related to the Christian life are difficult to explain because they are presented in typically eastern, dialectical pairs. These pairs seem contradictory, yet both poles are biblical. Western Christians have tended to choose one truth and ignore or depreciate the opposite truth. Some examples:

1. Is salvation an initial decision to trust Christ or a life-time commitment to discipleship?
2. Is salvation an election by means of grace from a sovereign God or a faith and repentant response on mankind's part to a divine offer?
3. Is salvation, once received, impossible to lose, or is there a need for continual diligence?

The issue of perseverance has been contentious throughout church history. The problem starts with seemingly conflicting passages of the NT:

1. texts on assurance
 - a. statements of Jesus in John's Gospel (John 6:37; 10:28-29)
 - b. statements of Paul (Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 1:13; 2:5,8-9; Phil. 1:6; 2:13; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:18)
 - b. statements of Peter (1 Pet. 1:4-5)
2. texts on the need for perseverance
 - a. statements of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 10:22; 13:1-9,24-30; 24:13; Mark 13:13)
 - b. statements of Jesus in John's Gospel (John 8:31; 15:4-10)
 - c. statements of Paul (Rom. 11:22; 1 Cor. 15:2; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 1:6; 3:4; 5:4; 6:9; Phil. 2:12; 3:18-20; Col. 1:23; 2 Tim. 3:2)
 - d. statements of the author of Hebrews (2:1; 3:6,14; 4:14; 6:11)
 - e. statements of John (1 John 2:6; 2 John 9; Rev. 2:7,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7)

Biblical salvation issues from the love, mercy, and grace of a sovereign Triune God. No human can be saved without the initiation of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65). Deity comes first and sets the agenda, but demands that humans must respond in faith and repentance, both initially and continually. God works with mankind in a covenant relationship. There are privileges and responsibilities!

Salvation is offered to all humans. Jesus' death dealt with the sin problem of the fallen creation! God has provided a way and wants all those made in His image to respond to His love and provision in Jesus.

If you would like to read more on this subject see

1. Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth*, Eerdmans, 1981 (pp. 348-365)
2. Howard Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God*, Bethany Fellowship, 1969
3. Robert Shank, *Life in the Son*, Westcott, 1961

The Bible addresses two different problems in this area: (1) taking assurance as a license to live fruitless, selfish lives or (2) encouraging those who struggle with ministry and personal sin. The problem is that the wrong groups are taking the wrong message and building theological systems on limited biblical passages. Some Christians desperately need the message of assurance, while others need the stern warnings of perseverance! Which group are you in?

There is a historical theological controversy involving Augustine versus Pelagius and Calvin versus Arminius (semi-Pelagian). The issue involves the question of salvation: if one is truly saved, must he persevere in faith and fruitfulness?

The Calvinists line up behind those biblical texts that assert God's sovereignty and keeping-power (John 10:27-30; Rom. 8:31-39; 1 John 5:13,18; 1 Pet. 1:3-5) and VERB TENSES like the PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLES of Eph. 2:5,8.

The Arminians line up behind those biblical texts that warn believers to “hold on,” “hold out,” or “continue” (Matt. 10:22; 24:9-13; Mark 13:13; John 15:4-6; 1 Cor. 15:2; Gal. 6:9; Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7). I personally do not believe that Hebrews 6 and 10 are applicable, but many Arminians use them as a warning against apostasy. The parable of the Sower in Matthew 13 and Mark 4 addresses the issue of apparent belief, as does John 8:31-59. As Calvinists quote the PERFECT TENSE VERBS used to describe salvation, the Arminians quote the PRESENT TENSE passages like 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor. 2:15.

This is a perfect example of how theological systems abuse the proof-texting method of interpretation. Usually a guiding principle or chief text is used to construct a theological grid by which all other texts are viewed. Be careful of grids from any source. They come from western logic, not revelation. The Bible is an eastern book. It presents truth in tension-filled, seemingly paradoxical pairs. Christians are meant to affirm both and live within the tension. The NT presents both the security of the believer and the demand for continuing faith and godliness. Christianity is an initial response of repentance and faith followed by a continuing response of repentance and faith. Salvation is not a product (a ticket to heaven or a fire insurance policy), but a relationship. It is a decision and discipleship. It is described in the NT in all VERB TENSES:

AORIST (completed action), Acts 15:11; Rom. 8:24; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5

PERFECT (completed action with continuing results), Eph. 2:5,8

PRESENT (continuing action), 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor. 2:15

FUTURE (future events or certain events), Rom. 5:8,10; 10:9; 1 Cor. 3:15; Phil. 1:28; 1 Thess. 5:8-9; Heb. 1:14; 9:28

7:12-13 God’s reactions to unrepentant people are (cf. Deut. 32:34-43)

1. He will sharpen His sword (cf. Ps. 17:13)
2. He has bent His bow (cf. Zech. 9:13)
3. He has prepared deadly weapons
4. He makes fiery arrows (cf. Ps. 38:2)

This terminology relates to warfare. This lends support to verse 7 addressing the nations, not just faithless Israelites.

7:14-16 These verses, however, seem to relate to personal, not national, enemies.

1. he travails with wickedness (see note below)
2. he conceives mischief (cf. Job 15:35; Isa. 59:4)
3. he brings forth falsehood
4. he digs a pit, Ps. 7:15a

(these seem to combine metaphors from birthing and hunting)

But notice the reversal (cf. Pro. 26:27; 28:10; Eccl. 10:8).

1. he falls into his own pit, Ps. 7:15b; 57:6
2. his mischief will return on his own head, Ps. 7:16a,b

7:14

NASB, NKJV “wickedness”

NRSV, JPSOA “evil”

NJB “malice”

REB “iniquity”

There is no matching VERB for this NOUN (BDB 19). There are no cognates to this root in the Semitic languages. It is found in poetic passages in the Psalms, Job, and Proverbs.

It may come from a root which denotes “power” or “an abuse of power” (NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 310). This is hated by YHWH (cf. Ps. 5:5; 11:5). It can denote inappropriate covenant conduct in

1. worship (cf. Isa. 1:13; Zech. 10:2)
2. politics (cf. Isa. 31:2)
3. the courts (cf. Isa. 10:1; 29:20)
4. warfare (Ps. 56:7)

This term denotes a heart that has a settled disposition against God and His people.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:17

**¹⁷I will give thanks to the LORD according to His righteousness
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.**

7:17 “I will give thanks. . .will sing praise” These are both COHORTATIVES (vows).

1. give thanks – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. sing praise – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* COHORTATIVE

The NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 406, #3, suggests that “thank offerings” were accompanied by verbal expressions of thanksgiving (i.e., songs, cf. Ps. 107:22; 116:17; Jonah 2:9). Prayers of lament often involved thanksgiving and praise (cf. Ps. 35:18; 43:4; 54:6; 56:12; 57:9; 69:30; 71:22; 109:30; 140:13; 142:7).

▣ **“the name of the LORD”** See Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12.

▣ **“Most High”** This Hebrew name, *Elyon* (BDB 751 II) is used often in the Psalms as a title for YHWH (cf. Gen. 14:19; Num. 24:16; Deut. 32:8; Ps. 9:2; 18:13; 21:7; 46:4; 47:2, and many more.). It comes from the word “high” or “upper” (BDB 751 I). It is linked with YHWH in 47:2, where it is parallel with “a great King over all the earth.” In Ps. 9:2 and 92:1 the exact phrase that is in Ps. 7:17 is repeated.

This was the title of the high god in the Canaanite pantheon. It is possible that Israel took this name (as they did the names of the gods of Babylon and Persia) as a way of asserting that their God was the only true God! See Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the theological distinction between “YHWH” and “*Elohim*”?
2. What are the psalmist’s enemies accusing him of in verses 3-4?
3. What does this statement, “God tries the hearts and minds,” mean?
4. Explain the difference between the Hebrew word “repent” and the Greek term “repent.”
5. Explain the literary concept of “reversal.” Why is it found so often in the Bible?

PSALM 8

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD's Glory and Man's Dignity <u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director; on the Gittith." A Psalm of David"	The Glory of the LORD in Creation	Hymn Celebrating God's Glory and the God-given Dignity of Human Beings	God's Glory and Human Dignity	The Power of God's Name
8:1-2	8:1	8:1a 8:1b-2	8:1-2	8:1a 8:1b-2
8:3-8	8:2 8:3-5	8:3-4 8:5-8	8:3-4 8:5-8	8:3-4 8:5-6 8:7-8
8:9	8:6-8 8:9	8:9	8:9	8:9

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-2

¹O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth,
Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!
²From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength
Because of Your adversaries,
To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.

8:1 “O LORD, our Lord” This is a combination of

1. YHWH – the covenant name (BDB 217) for God (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1)
2. *Adon* – the term (BDB 10) means “owner,” “husband,” “master,” or “lord.” Here it is PLURAL. Everywhere else this title is used in the Psalms it is SINGULAR (cf. Ps. 45:12; 57:5; 105:21; 110:1; 114:7, except in 136:3, where the CONSTRUCT “LORD of Lords” is used. This, then, must be an example of the “PLURAL OF MAJESTY.”

They are used together here of one God, but in Ps. 110:1 they are used separately of YHWH and His Messiah (cf. Matt. 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42,43; Acts 2:34,35; Heb. 1:13).

Also notice that in English translations the two terms are identified by the capitalization.

YHWH = LORD

Adon = Lord



NASB, NRSV,

NJB, JPSOA “majestic”

NKJV “excellent”

TEV “greatness”

REB “glorious”

NET Bible “magnificent”

This Hebrew ADJECTIVE (BDB 12) is used of things, people, and God. When used of God it is an attempt to describe His incomprehensible grandeur (cf. Ps. 76:4; 93:4).

The NOUN form (no VERB) is regularly used of clothing.

1. Esau’s hair like a hairy mantle – Gen. 25:25
2. expensive mantle stolen from Jericho by Achan – Jos. 7:21,24
3. Elijah’s mantle (symbol of YHWH’s enabling) – 1 Kgs. 19:13,19; 2 Kgs. 2:8,13,14
4. a prophet’s hairy mantle (a symbol of his prophetic office) – Zech. 13:4

It can also mean

1. glory – Zech. 11:3
2. noble – Ezek. 17:8

This phrase may be linked by subject (God’s place in creation) and the NOUN “majesty” (clothing) to Isaiah 6:1-4.

▣ **“name”** This stands for YHWH Himself. See Special Topic: The Name of YHWH at Ps. 5:11-12.

▣ **“In all the earth”** this refers to the entire creation (cf. Psalm 104; see Special Topic at Ps. 1:2). YHWH is the only true creator, redeemer God (see Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7).

▣ **“Who has displayed your splendor above the heavens”** There are several issues with the Hebrew text of this phrase.

1. The MT has an IMPERATIVE of the VERB “give” (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), “set Your splendor above the heavens” (see Special Topic: Heaven at Ps. 2:4).
2. The UBS Text Project (p. 169, see NIV) changes it to an INFINITIVE of the same VERB, “You have set Your splendor above the heavens” (the UBS rates this change as “D,” i.e., “highly doubtful”).
3. NET Bible takes it as PERFECT or IMPERFECT form, “You who place Your majesty upon the heavens” (p. 857).
4. Anchor Bible (vol. 16, p. 45) takes it as “I will adore Your majesty above the heavens,” by relating the VERB to Ugaritic usages.
5. UBS Handbook on Psalms (pp. 78-79, cf. REB) revocalizes it to “to tell” or “to praise,” “whose glory is told/praised above the heavens” (see Special Topic: Heavens at Ps. 2:4).

Just a personal note, I love this Psalm and the song “The Majesty and Glory of Your Name.” I feel God’s presence in a wonderful way when I think of this message about the incomprehensible grandeur of our God. I do not want an academic issue to take away from this worshipful message. But at the same time, I want to be true to the message of the inspired author! May the Spirit of God help us to know Him, proclaim Him, and live in the light of His presence!

▣ **“above the heavens”** This can be understood in several ways.

1. the whole verse is extolling the God of creation
2. God’s praises reach as high as the heavens
3. creation tells/reveals the glory/majesty of its Creator (i.e., the night sky, Ps. 8:3)

See Special Topics: “Heaven” and “Heavens and the Third Heaven” at Ps. 2:4.

8:2 “from the mouth of infants and nursing babes” This is obviously hyperbole. These infants cannot speak, yet their very presence shows the glory and majesty of God and His creation. This is the natural revelation of Ps. 19:1-6. Through the things of this creation God is known (cf. Rom. 1:19-20; 2:14-16).

This verse from the LXX is quoted by Jesus to the Pharisees watching His “Triumphal Entry” into Jerusalem in Matt. 21:16.



NASB, JPSOA “You have established strength”

NKJV “You have ordained strength”

NRSV, REB “You have founded a bulwark”

NJB “You make him a fortress”

The VERB (BDB 413, KB 417, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 89:11, *Qal* PERFECT) means “establish” (cf. 1 Chr. 9:22) or “founded” (cf. Jos. 6:26; 1 Kgs. 16:34; Ezra 3:10; Isa. 14:32; 28:16).

The word “strength” (BDB 738) normally means “strength,” but in this context it refers to “a stronghold for defense.”

There is a word play between “nursing babes” (BDB 413) and “establish” (BDB 413).

YHWH, the Creator, is revealed in the heavens and in the little ones. All creation shouts His presence and purpose!

The exact meaning of this verse is uncertain, but apparently the little ones who reveal God’s majesty are under attack and God defends and protects them, as He does all who reveal His truths!

8:2b Notice the PARTICIPLES that express the evil opponents.

1. adversaries – BDB 865 II, KB 1058, *Qal* PARTICIPLE

2. enemy – BDB 33, KB 38, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
3. revengeful – BDB 667, KB 721, *Hithpael* PARTICIPLE

See full note on the names of the psalmist's opponents at Ps. 1:5 and 5:10.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:3-8

³When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
 The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
⁴What is man that You take thought of him,
 And the son of man that You care for him?
⁵Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
 And You crown him with glory and majesty!
⁶You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;
 You have put all things under his feet,
⁷All sheep and oxen,
 And also the beasts of the field,
⁸The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,
 Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

8:3 This verse expresses the wonder of humans as they view the night sky. For many in the ANE it was a source of superstition and fear. But for the Israelites it was the canvas of YHWH (cf. Gen. 1:14-19).

The VERB “ordained” (BDB 465, KB 464, *Polel* PERFECT) is also used of God’s creation in Ps. 24:2; 119:90. The next verse focuses on God’s creation of humans (cf. Deut. 32:6). Creation, beautiful creation, had a purpose—a platform for God and mankind to fellowship (see full note at Ps. 2:8). Everything in the Bible between Genesis 3 and Revelation 20 is God restoring the fellowship lost in Eden. It is not by accident that Genesis 1-2 parallel Revelation 21-22!

▣ **“the work of Your fingers”** This is anthropomorphic language. See Special Topic at Ps. 2:4-6.

I recommend reading John H. Walton, *ANE Thought and the OT*, chapter 7, “Cosmic Geography,” pp. 165-178, as a way to orient the modern reader to the worldview of the ANE, so different from our own!

The worship of the sun and moon were common in the ANE. Genesis 1 is a polemic against Babylonian astral worship, as the plagues of Egypt were a polemic against the nature gods of Egypt.

God creates the heavenly bodies (cf. Gen. 1:14-19) and controls them.

SPECIAL TOPIC: MOON WORSHIP

Moon worship was the most widespread mythology of the Ancient Near East starting with *Sumer*. There was both a male and female aspect to the myth. Originally the moon god came from the rape of the grain goddess, *Ninlil* by *Enlil*, the sky god. *Enlil* was cast out of the pantheon and condemned to the underworld for his act, but when *Ninlil* found out she was with child she joined him. The child, *Sin*, was allowed to climb into the sky each night.

The worship of the moon is designed by its different phases.

1. new moon – *Asimbabbar*
2. crescent moon – *Sin*
3. full moon – *Nanaa* (Sumerian “illumination” from *En-su*, “lord of wisdom”)

These names basically mean “wise lord” (i.e., *Suen*) or “illumination” (*Nanaa*), worshiped at Ur of the Chaldees. The city itself was often called the city of Nannar. The fertility pair were worshiped at Ziggurats (large pyramids with flat tops) located in the city. The sun god (*Shamash*) was the firstborn of the couple and later *Ereshkigal* (the Queen of the Underworld) and I Nanna (*the Queen of Heaven/sky*).

The cult was spread all across the ANE, but the major centers of worship were

1. Ur
2. Haran
3. Tema
4. Canaan
5. Mecca

Basically this mythology combined the fertility emphasis with astral worship.

The OT rejects astral worship (cf. Deut. 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kgs. 21:3,5; 23:5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5) and fertility worship (i.e., *Ba'al* and *Asherah*, Ugarit poems). The Hebrews, originally nomads, were very careful to resist moon worship because in general moon worship was characteristic of nomadic peoples who traveled at night, while the sun was much more generally worshiped by settled or agricultural peoples. Eventually nomads settled and then astral worship in general became the problem.

8:4 Note the synonymous parallelism between the two lines of poetry and especially “man” (BDB 60, *enosh*, cf. Ps. 9:20, also note Ps. 103:14) and “son of man” (BDB 119 CONSTRUCT BDB 9, “son of man,” “*ben Adam*,” cf. Ps. 144:3).

The first term, *enosh*, has two meanings.

1. BDB 60 I – weak, sick, frail (from the Hebrew VERB; *Niphal*, 2 Sam. 12:15; *Qal* PASSIVE, Isa. 17:11; Jer. 15:18; 17:9)
2. BDB 60 II – mankind, as used here without the connotation of weak, quite the opposite

The second term/phrase, “son of man,” is a Hebrew idiom for a human person (i.e., Ps. 146:3; Ezek. 2:1). YHWH gives special attention to His highest creation, made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), for fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:8). Humans are significant creatures, uniquely related to God. We are part of this creation, yet more than the physical! Once created, we are eternal, spiritual creatures.

Humans are a higher spiritual order than angels. I know that sounds ridiculous, but think with me.

1. no angel is ever said to be made in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27)
2. Jesus did not die to redeem angels (cf. Heb. 2:14-16)
3. believers will judge the angels (cf. 1 Cor. 6:3)
4. angels are to serve mankind (cf. Heb. 1:14)

In the creation myth of *Sumer* and later Babylon, humans were noisy, bothersome, and expendable (see intro. notes to Genesis 1-11), but in the Bible it is just the opposite. They are the focus of YHWH’s creative activity.



NASB

“take thought of him”

NKJV, NRSV,

JPSOA, REB,

LXX

“mindful of him”

TEV

“think of them”

NJB

“spare a thought for them”

The VERB (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “remember,” in the sense of “think about kindly” (cf. Ps. 9:12; 78:39; 98:3; 103:14; 105:8,42; 106:45; 111:5; 115:12; 136:23). Usually in the Bible, God is

called on to “forget” human sin and humans are called on to “remember” God, but here the psalmist is awestruck with the vastness and beauty of creation and the thought that its Creator has time and concern for one special creature on this one planet! But, this is the intellectual/theological question, isn’t it (i.e., naturalism vs. purposeful creator)?

8:5 The dignity and worth of humans are clearly seen in this verse. We were “made” is a VERB (BDB 341, KB 338, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. Eccl. 4:8) which means “cause to lack” or “made him inferior” to only God Himself (*Elohim*). The LXX interprets this as “angels” (cf. Heb. 2:7), but the context of Psalm 8 demands “God” because this psalm reflects God’s creation in Genesis. Although it is possible that the PLURAL “us” in Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7, reflects God’s heavenly council (cf. 1 Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; 2:1; Ps. 82:1,6; 86:8; 89:6,8; Dan. 7:10), and thereby, refers to angels in leadership (cf. Gen. 3:5). However, I think contextually “God” is best.

Notice that *enosh/ben Adam* is crowned with

1. glory – BDB 458
2. majesty – BDB 214

Humanity is the highest creation of God. They were created for fellowship with God. They function as His supervisors on earth (cf. Gen. 1:28). All physical creation is a stage for God and mankind to meet and come to know each other (cf. Gen. 3:8).

8:6-8 As Ps. 8:3 surely has a Genesis 1 orientation, so too, verse 6 (cf. Gen. 1:28). Humans were God’s stewards in the Garden (and by implication, all creation). Humans rule (BDB 605, KB 647, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT), subdue (BDB 461, KB 460, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Gen. 1:28), and have dominion (BDB 921, KB 1190, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Gen. 1:28) only in their connection with God! We are stewards!

8:6 “the works of Your hands” This is referring to Genesis 1 (cf. Job 14:15; Ps. 92:4; 138:8; 143:5), as is “the work of Your fingers” in v. 3 (cf. Ps. 102:25). It is interesting that in Genesis 1 God’s creative activities are by the spoken word. Only mankind is made/fashioned by personal attention in Gen. 2:7. See Special Topic: God Described as Human (anthropomorphism) at Ps. 2:4-6.

8:7 The order of the creation of these creatures is parallel to Genesis 1. This Psalm (like Psalm 104) must be read in light of Genesis 1! If Genesis 1-2 were in the Psalms, we would not be debating their genre or literalness!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:9

**’O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth!**

8:9 This Psalm ends as it began (v. 1b). The theme and major character of the Bible is God!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How are “the heavens” and “infants” related?
2. Does YHWH have “fingers”?
3. Why is it theologically significant that YHWH creates the sun and moon?
4. How is “man” in verse 4a related to “son of man” in verse 4b?
5. Is man a little lower than the angels or God? Why?

PSALM 9

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Psalm of Thanksgiving for God's Justice	Prayer and Thanksgiving for the LORD'S Righteous Judgments	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies (Psalm 9-10, A Lament)	Thanksgiving To God for His Justice	God Strikes the Wicked and Saves the Humbled (Psalm 9-10) Acrostic
<u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director; on Muth-labben. A Psalm of David"				
9:1-2	9:1-2	9:1-2	9:1-2	9:1 (<i>Aleph</i>) 9:2
9:3-6	9:3-5	9:3-4 9:5-6	9:3-4 9:5-6	9:3-4 (<i>Bet</i>) 9:5-6 (<i>Gimel</i>)
9:7-10	9:6-8 9:9-10	9:7-8 9:9-10	9:7-8 9:9-10	9:7-8 (<i>He</i>) 9:9-10 (<i>Waw</i>)
9:11-16	9:11-12 9:13-14 9:15-16	9:11-12 9:13-14 9:15-16	9:11-12 9:13-14 9:15-16	9:11-12 (<i>Zain</i>) 9:13-14 (<i>Het</i>) 9:15-16 (<i>Tet</i>)
9:17-20	9:17-18 9:19-20	9:17 9:19-20	9:17-18 9:19-20	9:17 (<i>Yod</i>) 9:18 (<i>Kaph</i>) 9:19-20

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) asserts that Psalm 9 and Psalm 10 form a loose acrostic (cf. LXX).
- B. Acrostics are a specialized type of poetry. In order to make each letter fit
 1. rare words used
 2. rare forms of words used
 3. strained lines of poetry occur
 4. unusual metaphor and figurative language occurs
 5. use of PREPOSITIONS

The ancients felt the alphabet had magical significance (i.e., Kabala, Ras Shamra texts).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:1-2

**¹I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart;
I will tell of all Your wonders.
²I will be glad and exult in You;
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.**

9:1-2 This opening strophe has five COHORTATIVES.

1. I will give thanks – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. I will tell – BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
3. I will be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
4. I will exult – BDB 763, KB 836, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
5. I will sing, praise – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* COHORTATIVE

All of these relate to YHWH (i.e., the Most High). Thanksgiving and praise are the duty of mankind. These are signs/evidences of an intimate, personal, daily relationship with God.

Notice the four “I wills” of vv. 1-2 are based on the five “You have’s” of Ps. 9:4-6. YHWH has acted! Now His followers can praise Him!

9:1 “with all my heart” This was a Hebrew idiom of complete devotion (cf. Psalm 86:12; 111:1; 138:1; 1 Kgs. 8:23,61; 11:4; 1 Chr. 28:9). For “heart” see Special Topic at Ps. 4:7.



NASB, NJB,

JPSOA “wonders”

NKJV “marvelous works”

NRSV, REB,

LXX “wonderful deeds”

This is a Hebrew CONSTRUCT (BDB 481 and BDB 810, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE). See Special Topic below.

TOPIC: WONDERFUL THINGS (פלא)

This word (BDB 810) denotes actions that humans cannot accomplish themselves or can even explain, acts which cause wonder and awe (cf. Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17,27; Zech. 8:6).

The VERB

1. the Exodus, Exod. 3:20; 34:10; Mic. 7:15
2. plagues, Deut. 28:59
3. crossing of Jordan, Jos. 3:5
4. past events of God, Jdgs. 6:13; 1 Chr. 16:9,12,24; Neh. 9:17
5. birth of Samson, Jdgs. 13:19
6. David's love for Jonathan, 2 Sam. 1:26
7. often in Job, 5:9; 9:10; 10:16; 37:5,14; 42:3
8. thirty-two times in the Psalms
9. YHWH's counsel, Isa. 28:29
10. YHWH's acts, Isa. 29:14 (twice); Joel 2:26

The NOUN

1. the Exodus, Exod. 15:11; Ps. 77:11,14; 78:12
2. in relation to the dead, Ps. 88:10,12
3. heaven praises YHWH's acts, Ps. 89:5
4. YHWH's laws, Ps. 119:129
5. YHWH's Messiah, Isa. 9:6
6. YHWH's acts, Isa. 25:1; 29:14
7. end-time actions, Dan. 12:6

God acts in powerful, redemptive ways to reveal Himself to His highest creation (mankind). He wants them to know Him and trust Him. His acts are revelation, the recording of those acts is inspiration, and the understanding of those acts is illumination. YHWH wants the world to know Him!

9:2 “in You. . .to Your Name” These are parallel. Notice the personal element in worship. See Special Topic: The Name of YHWH at Ps. 5:11-12.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:3-6

- ³When my enemies turn back,
They stumble and perish before You.**
- ⁴For You have maintained my just cause;
You have sat on the throne judging righteously.**
- ⁵You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the wicked;
You have blotted out their name forever and ever.**
- ⁶The enemy has come to an end in perpetual ruins,
And You have uprooted the cities;
The very memory of them has perished.**

9:3-6 This strophe extolls YHWH as a Righteous Judge (cf. Ps. 9:4b).

Notice His actions toward the enemy.

1. enemies turn back, v. 3a – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (i.e., in battle)
2. enemies stumble, v. 3b – BDB 505, KB 502, *Niphal* IMPERFECT
3. enemies perish, v. 3b – BDB 1, KB 2, *Qal* IMPERFECT
4. has rebuked the nations, v. 5a – BDB 172, KB 199, *Qal* PERFECT (NET Bible sees this as referring to a “battle cry,” p. 858, #19)
5. has destroyed the wicked, v. 5a – BDB 1, KB 2, *Piel* PERFECT
6. has blotted out their name, v. 5b – BDB 562, KB 567, *Qal* PERFECT (i.e., died in battle)
7. has uprooted the enemy’s cities, v. 6 – BDB 684, KB 737, *Qal* PERFECT

Notice how YHWH is characterized.

1. You have maintained my just cause
2. You sat on the throne judging righteously
3. cf. Ps. 9:7-8 (emphasis repeated in next strophe)

It is possible that “the just cause” is YHWH installing the psalmist as King of His covenant people.

9:3 “perish before You” Notice this VERB (BDB 1, KB 2) is repeated in vv. 5, 6, 18. It is used of

1. individual enemies
2. the nations
3. the afflicted (negated)

It obviously refers to physical life but also of eternal existence (cf. v. 6, Hebrew idiom). Opposing God and His people is a dangerous activity with temporal and eschatological consequences.

9:5 “the nations” The same switch from an individual to “the nations” (cf. Ps. 9:17-20) occurs in Ps. 7:6-7. Many psalms written by individuals became corporate in worship liturgy.

Also note that YHWH as Judge is expressed in Ps. 7:7 (cf. Ps. 9:4-6,7-8).

▣ **“has blotted out their name forever and ever”** Notice how the theme of “permanent” judgment is repeated (cf. Ps. 69:28).

1. blotted out, v. 5 (*Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 69:28; also note Num. 5:23; Deut. 9:14; 25:19; 29:20)
2. forever and ever, v. 5 (see Special Topic: Forever below)
3. perpetual ruins, v. 6 (*Piel* PERFECT, cf. Jer. 25:9; 49:13)
4. the very memory of them has perished, v. 6 (*Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 34:16; 109:15)

Verses 5-6 remind me of the opening dialog in Malachi 1, where Israel’s very existence is contrasted with the complete demise of Edom as evidence of YHWH’s covenant love. Where are the ancient surrounding nations? They are lost to history, but not Israel!

The VERB “blot out” (#1) may refer to the book of life.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (‘*OLAM*)

The etymology of the Hebrew term *’olam*, עולם (BDB 761) is uncertain (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 345). It is used in several senses (usually determined by context). The following are only selected examples.

1. ancient things
 - a. peoples, Gen. 6:4; 1 Sam. 27:8; Jer. 5:15; 28:8
 - b. places, Isa. 58:12; 61:4
 - c. God, Ps. 93:2; Pro. 8:23; Isa. 63:16

- d. things, Gen. 49:26; Job 22:15; Ps. 24:7,9; Isa. 46:9
- e. time, Deut. 32:7; Isa. 51:9; 63:9,11
- 2. future time
 - a. one's life, Exod. 21:6; Deut. 15:17; 1 Sam. 1:22; 27:12
 - b. hyperbole for king, 1 Kgs. 1:31; Ps. 61:7; Neh. 2:3
 - c. continuous existence
 - (1) earth, Ps. 78:69; 104:5; Eccl. 1:4
 - (2) heavens, Ps. 148:5
 - d. existence of God
 - (1) Gen. 21:33
 - (2) Exod. 15:18
 - (3) Deut. 32:40
 - (4) Ps. 93:2
 - (5) Isa. 40:28
 - (6) Jer. 10:10
 - (7) Dan. 12:7
 - e. the covenant
 - (1) Gen. 9:12,16; 17:7,13,19
 - (2) Exod. 31:16
 - (3) Lev. 24:8
 - (4) Num. 18:19
 - (5) 2 Sam. 23:5
 - (6) Ps. 105:10
 - (7) Isa. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8
 - (8) Jer. 32:40; 50:5
 - f. special covenant with David
 - (1) 2 Sam. 7:13,16,25,29; 22:51; 23:5
 - (2) 1 Kgs. 2:33,45; 9:5
 - (3) 2 Chr. 13:5
 - (4) Ps. 18:50; 89:4,28,36,37
 - (5) Isa. 9:7; 16:5; 37:35; 55:3
 - g. God's Messiah
 - (1) Ps. 45:2; 72:17; 89:35-36; 110:4
 - (2) Isa. 9:6
 - h. God's laws
 - (1) Exod. 29:28; 30:21
 - (2) Lev. 6:18,22; 7:34; 10:15; 24:9
 - (3) Num. 18:8,11,19
 - (4) Ps. 119:89,160

- i. God's promises
 - (1) 2 Sam. 7:13,16,25; 22:51
 - (2) 1 Kgs. 9:5
 - (3) Ps. 18:50
 - (4) Isa. 40:8
- j. Abraham's descendants and the Promised Land
 - (1) Gen. 13:15; 17:19; 48:4
 - (2) Exod. 32:13
 - (3) 1 Chr. 16:17
- k. covenantal feasts
 - (1) Exod. 12:14,17,24
 - (2) Lev. 23:14,21,41
 - (3) Num. 10:8
- l. eternity everlasting
 - (1) 1 Kgs. 8:13
 - (2) Ps. 61:7-8; 77:8; 90:2; 103:17; 145:13
 - (3) Isa. 26:4; 45:17
 - (4) Dan. 9:24
- m. what the Psalms say believers will do forever
 - (1) give thanks, Ps. 30:12; 79:13
 - (2) abide in His presence, Ps. 41:12; 61:4,7
 - (3) trust in His mercy, Ps. 52:8
 - (4) praise the LORD, Ps. 52:9
 - (5) sing praises, Ps. 61:8; 89:1
 - (6) declare His justice, Ps. 75:9
 - (7) glorify His name, Ps. 86:12; 145:2
 - (8) bless His name, Ps. 145:1
- 3. both backward and forward in time ("from everlasting to everlasting")
 - a. Ps. 41:13 (praise to God)
 - b. Ps. 90:2 (God Himself)
 - c. Ps. 103:17 (the lovingkindness of the LORD)

Remember, context determines the extent of the term's meaning. The everlasting covenants and promises are conditional (i.e., Jeremiah 7). Be careful of reading your modern view of time or your NT systematic theology into every OT usage of this very fluid word. The NT universalized OT promises.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TWO BOOKS OF GOD

- A. In one sense the title of this Special Topic could describe
 - 1. nature (i.e., creation, cf. Ps. 19:1-6)
 - 2. Scripture (cf. Ps. 19:7-14)

This is why I do not think that ultimately there should be a conflict between science and faith, all truth is God's truth. Please see my commentary on Genesis 1-11 online free at www.freebiblecommentary.org

B. There are two books mentioned in the Bible (cf. Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12)

1. The book that contains all the deeds of humans, both good and bad. In a sense it is a metaphor of God's memory and that one day all humans will give an account to their Creator of their stewardship of the gift of life.
 - a. Psalm 56:8; 139:16
 - b. Isaiah 65:6
 - c. Malachi 3:16
 - d. Rev. 20:12-13
2. The book that lists those who have a faith/repentant/obedient relationship with YHWH/Jesus. This is a metaphor of God's memory of those who are redeemed and heaven-bound.
 - a. Exodus 32:32-33
 - b. Psalm 69:28
 - c. Isaiah 4:3
 - d. Daniel 12:1
 - e. Philippians 4:3
 - f. Hebrews 12:23
 - g. Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27
 - h. also mentioned in I Enoch 47:3; 81:1-2; 103:2; 108:3

These books represent God's faithfulness to His Word. For those who rebel and refuse, He remembers their sins; for those who repent, believe, obey, serve, and persevere, He forgets their sins (cf. Ps. 103:11-13; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19). There is abundant assurance and confidence in God's unchanging, merciful character, promises, and provisions. God is trustworthy!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:7-10

- ⁷**But the LORD abides forever;
He has established His throne for judgment,**
- ⁸**And He will judge the world in righteousness;
He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.**
- ⁹**The LORD also will be a stronghold for the oppressed,
A stronghold in times of trouble;**
- ¹⁰**And those who know Your name will put their trust in You,
For You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.**

9:7-8 Nations will come and go based on their relationship to the righteous God/Judge (cf. Ps. 89:14).

SPECIAL TOPIC: JUDGE, JUDGMENT, AND JUSTICE (שֹׁפֵט) IN ISAIAH

This is a widely used term (BDB 1047) in the OT. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 214, has characterized its distribution and significance.

1. Pentateuch, 13%, human judges
2. History books, 34%, human leaders
3. Wisdom Literature, 22%, divine activity
4. Prophets, 31%, mostly divine activity

Note the following chart.

YHWH as Judge	Messiah as Judge	Israel's Ideal Judges	Israel's Actual Judges
2:4	9:7	1:17,21,23	3:2
3:14	11:3,4	26:8	5:7
4:4	16:5	56:1	10:2
5:16	32:1	58:2,8	59:4,9,11,14,15
28:6,17,26	40:14		
30:18	42:1,3,4		
33:5,22	51:4,5		
61:8	53:8		
66:16			

Israel was to reflect YHWH's character to the nations. She failed, so YHWH raised one "ideal" Israelite to fulfill His personal revelation to the world (i.e., the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, cf. Isa. 52:11-53:12)!

9:7

NASB "abides"
NKJV "endures"

NRSV, TEV,
NJB "sits enthroned"

Psalm 9:7 is in stark contrast to vv. 5-6. The rebellious nations are temporary but the God of Israel is permanently enthroned (BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 10:16; 29:10).

The second VERB of v. 7, "established" (BDB 465, KB 464), is a *Polel* PERFECT, which denotes His permanent throne!

9:8 "He will judge the world in righteousness" Again the theological issue is the meaning of "world" (BDB 385). In Ps. 96:13 and 98:9, this word is parallel with *erets* (BDB 75, see Special Topic: Land, Country, Earth at Ps. 2:2). It must refer to the "known" world of that day. However, from the NT this concept involves the whole planet (i.e., John 3:16).

9:9 "stronghold" The VERB (BDB 960) means "to be high." The NOUN is used regularly of God as a high, mighty, and safe stronghold or fortress (cf. Ps. 9:9 [twice]; 18:2; 46:7,11; 48:3; 59:9,16,17; 62:2,6; 94:22; 144:2). This is an idiom for safety and protection. For the faithful follower (cf. v. 10) our God is our stronghold and there is no other!

Notice the phrase, "in times of trouble," of v. 9b reappears in Ps. 10:1b. It is found only here in the OT. There is some doubt about the meaning of the word translated "trouble" (BDB 131). In Jer. 14:1 and 17:8

it means “drought,” but that connotation does not fit here. Remember words only have meaning in sentences and sentences in literary units.

9:10a This line of poetry expresses a major biblical reality. I have added my comments from Isa. 26:3-4 below.

For the Hebrew word “know” see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6.

Isaiah 26

26:3 “The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace” Notice the covenantal aspect.

1. The believer’s mind is stayed on YHWH (BDB 701, KB 759, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, but used in an ACTIVE sense, cf. 1 Chr. 29:18).
2. YHWH keeps him/her (BDB 665 I, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERFECT, the covenant relationship has two participants, see Special Topic at 1:19).
3. “Perfect peace” is a doubling of *shalom* (BDB 1022, cf. DSS). This doubling of words is very common in this section of Isaiah.

▣ **“he trusts in You”** The word “trust” (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) means “trust in YHWH” (cf. 12:2; 26:4; 36:15; 37:10; 50:10). Notice that the next verse has the same word as an IMPERATIVE. This is such an important theological concept of the need for a personal relationship with God, not just obedience. Both are crucial!

26:4 “Trust in the LORD forever” For the VERB (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), see Special Topic at 22:23.

The name for Deity in the first line of v. 4 is YHWH; in the second line a CONTRACTION *Yah* and YHWH, see Special Topic at 1:1.

The term “forever” (BDB 723 I), first the PLURAL form and then the SINGULAR form (CONSTRUCT, cf. 65:18; Ps. 83:18; 92:8). This construction, along with “everlasting” (BDB 761), used of YHWH, implies a personal relationship beyond this life (cf. vv. 14,19; Ps. 23:6).

▣ **“we have an everlasting rock”** The word “rock” is a metaphor for God’s unchanging character (cf. Ps. 18:1, 2; Isa. 17:10; 30:29; 44:8).

9:10b What a wonderful statement of YHWH’s faithfulness! This is a repeated theme in the Psalms (cf. Ps. 37:28; 94:14). Believers’ hope is in the unchanging character of the merciful Creator (cf. Mal. 3:6).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL’S GOD

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Compassionate (BDB 933) | – | Exod. 34:6; Deut. 4:31; 2 Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2 |
| 2. Gracious (BDB 337) | – | Exod. 34:6; 1 Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2 |
| 3. Slow to anger (BDB74 CONSTRUCT BDB 60) | – | Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2 |
| 4. Abounding in steadfast love (BDB 912 I CONSTRUCT BDB 338) | – | Exod. 34:6-7; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2 |
| 5. Faithful (BDB 54) | – | Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15 |
| 6. Abundant forgiveness (BDB 699) | – | Neh. 9:17 |
| 7. Did not forsake them (BDB 736 I) | – | Neh. 9:17,31 |
| 8. Repents of evil (BDB 636, KB 688, <i>Niphal</i> PARTICIPLE + BDB 948) | – | Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2 |
| 9. The great God (BDB 42, 152) | – | Neh. 1:5; 9:32 |

- | |
|--|
| 10. Great and terrible (BDB 152, 431) – Neh. 1:5; 4:14; 9:32 |
| 11. Keeps covenant (BDB 1036, 136) – Neh. 1:5; 9:32 |
| 12. Steadfast love (BDB 338) – Neh. 1:5; 9:32 |

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:11-16

- ¹¹Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion;
Declare among the peoples His deeds.
- ¹²For He who requires blood remembers them;
He does not forget the cry of the afflicted.
- ¹³Be gracious to me, O LORD;
See my affliction from those who hate me,
You who lift me up from the gates of death,
- ¹⁴That I may tell of all Your praises,
That in the gates of the daughter of Zion
I may rejoice in Your salvation.
- ¹⁵The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have made;
In the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught.
- ¹⁶The LORD has made Himself known;
He has executed judgment.
In the work of his own hands the wicked is snared. **Higgaion Selah.**

9:11-12 YHWH is praised because of His justice (cf. vv. 12,15-16).

1. He avenges bloodshed
2. He does not forget the cry of the afflicted

His justice is seen in the evil plans of the wicked by which they have ensnared themselves (cf. vv. 15-16).

9:11 “who dwells in Zion” Zion is the hill in Jerusalem on which stood the Jebusite fortress that was captured by David. He built his palace on this hill. It came to designate the entire city.

Jerusalem, and particularly the temple on the hill Moriah, became the place where YHWH “dwelt,” between the wings of the *Cherubim* above the ark of the covenant. This place fulfills the repeated phrase in Deuteronomy, “the place that YHWH causes His name to dwell.”

9:12

NASB	“He who requires blood”
NKJV, NRSV	“He avenges blood”
NJB, REB	“the avenger of blood”
JPSOA	“He who requires bloodshed”

This phrase links to Gen. 9:5-6. Life is a gift from God. One who takes away that gift must give an account before God and pay with his/her own life (cf. Deut. 32:43).

Later in Hebrew thought this developed into “the Blood Avenger” (i.e., Jos. 20:3,5,9).

▣ **“remembers them. . .does not forget”** Notice how “remembers” is parallel with “forget” (negated). He will not forget His people!

9:13-14 The wicked seek the psalmist's life (i.e., the King) but YHWH has delivered him. Now he wants to praise YHWH in the tabernacle/temple ("who dwells in Zion," v. 11).

1. "that I may tell" – BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
2. "that I may rejoice" – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* COHORTATIVE

9:13 "the gates of death" *Sheol* (see full note at Ps. 6:5) is depicted as

1. an open grave/pit (cf. Exod. 15:12; Num. 16:22; 26:11; Ps. 124:3; Pro. 1:12)
2. a carnivorous animal (cf. Isa. 5:14; Hab. 2:5)
3. a city with gates (cf. Job 38:17; Ps. 107:18; Isa. 38:10; Matt. 16:18) or
4. a prison with gates (cf. Rev. 1:8; 9:1; 20:1)

9:14 "in the gates of the daughter of Zion" There is an obvious contrast between "the gates of death" in v. 13c and the gates of Jerusalem/temple in v. 14c. In the first there is no remembrance but in the second there is praise and testimony about YHWH.

9:15-16 Notice the string of six PERFECTS. The defeat of the enemy army by YHWH (i.e., Holy War imagery of the Conquest) is the focus.

9:15 Notice the psalmist's adversaries are nations (cf. v. 17) and not individuals. Therefore, this must be a king, so the traditional introduction is probably correct.

9:16 In the OT God's character is manifested in time by His actions.

1. grace, mercy, and love toward covenant people
2. judgment and wrath toward their enemies

Notice the reversal of the plans of the wicked. What they planned for others, occurs to them. Justice is built into God's created order.



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, JPSOA

"snared"

TEV, REB

"trapped"

NJB

"ensnared"

LXX

"trap"

The MT has "strikes down" from BDB 669, KB 723, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE (found only here in the OT). All the English translations see it as the *Niphal* PERFECT of BDB 430, KB 432, "entrap" or "lure." The UBS Text Project (p. 171) gives the MT a "C" rating (considerable doubt).

▣ "Higgaion" The BDB (212; see note at Intro. to Psalms, VII) defines this as

1. resounding music (cf. Ps. 92:3)
2. meditation, musing (cf. Ps. 19:14)

It is translated in Lam. 3:62 as "mutter" (KB 238).

▣ "Selah" See note at Psalm 3:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:17-20

¹⁷The wicked will return to Sheol,
Even all the nations who forget God. ¹⁸For the needy will not always be forgotten,
Nor the hope of the afflicted perish forever.
¹⁹Arise, O LORD, do not let man prevail;
Let the nations be judged before You.
²⁰Put them in fear, O LORD;
Let the nations know that they are but men. Selah.

9:17-18 As the wicked act foolishly (i.e., turn to *Sheol*), the needy (BDB 2) and afflicted (BDB 776, lit. “poor”) will be helped by YHWH.

9:17 “all the nations who forget God” Most of Israel’s enemies were from the surrounding nations who had some exposure to YHWH. The VERB “forget” (BDB 1013) implies they had turned from the truth and by implication, worshiped false idols.

9:19-20 These last two lines comprise a series of commands for YHWH to act.

1. arise – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (in contrast to Ps. 9:4b,7, where He sits enthroned on call to action as the Divine Warrior)
2. do not let man prevail – BDB 738, KB 808, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. let the nations be judged before You – BDB 1047, KB 1622, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. put them in fear – BDB 1011, KB 1483, *Qal* IMPERFECT
5. let the nations know they are but men – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (cf. Ps. 62:9; 90:5-6; 103:14; Isa. 40:7-8)

9:20 “Selah” See note at Psalm 3:2.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is verse 3 a court scene?
2. How are “the nations” and “the wicked” of verse 5 related?
3. Define the different “gates” in verses 13 and 14.
4. How are *Sheol* and the Pit related?

PSALM 10

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Prayer for the Overthrow of the Wicked No MT Intro	A Song of Confidence in God's Triumph Over Evil	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies (Psalm 9-10, A Lament) Acrostic	A Prayer for Justice	God Strikes the Wicked and Saves the Humble (Psalm 9-10) Acrostic Continues
10:1-2	10:1-2	10:1-2	10:1-2	10:1-2 (<i>Lamed</i>)
10:3-4	10:3-4	10:3-4	10:3-4	10:3 (<i>Mem</i>) 10:4 (<i>Nun</i>)
10:5-11	10:5-7	10:5-6	10:5-7	10:5 10:6a,b 10:6c-7a 10:7b-8b (<i>Pe</i>)
	10:8-11	10:8b-9 10:10-11	10:8-9 10:10-11	10:8c-9 (<i>Ain</i>) 10:10-11
10:12-15	10:12-13 10:14-15	10:12-13 10:14 10:15-16	10:12-13 10:14 10:15	10:12-13 (<i>Qoph</i>) 10:14 (<i>Resh</i>) 10:15-16 (<i>Shim</i>)
10:16-18	10:16-18	10:17-18	10:16 10:17-18	10:17-18 (<i>Taw</i>)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:1-2

¹Why do You stand afar off, O LORD?

Why do You hide *Yourself* in times of trouble?

²In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted;

Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.

10:1 This is a common question for faithful believers in a fallen world. Evil and suffering are often surprises and unexpected events. Why would our loving, merciful God allow this?

There is no biblical answer except that we live in a fallen world. This is not the world God intended it to be, nor is it the world it will be in the future. As a theologian I must assert that God has allowed us to reap the consequences of both Adam/Eve's sin and our personal choices. Yet He has aggressively acted on our behalf in redemption! The best book on the subject of evil and suffering in this life/world, which truly takes it seriously, is John W. Wenham, *The Goodness of God*.

▣ The psalmist asks two specific questions ("why") about God's apparent absence.

1. stand far off – BDB 763, KB 840, *Qal* IMPERFECT

2. hide *Yourself* – BDB 761, KB 834, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 27:9; 55:1; 69:17

YHWH promised to be present and involved with His covenant people but He seems to be absent and purposefully inactive (cf. Ps. 10:5a,11)!

Notice the sound play and parallelism so characteristic of ANE poetry (see Appendix: Hebrew Poetry).

These charges are not reality but the emotions of confused and hurting believers.

10:2 Notice the characteristics of the wicked.

1. pride/arrogance – BDB 144, cf. Ps. 31:18,23; 36:11; 73:6

2. hotly pursue – BDB 196, KB 223, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Gen. 31:36; 1 Sam. 17:53; Lam. 4:19

3. devise plots – BDB 362, KB 359, *Qal* PERFECT

This is developed further in the next strophes (vv. 3-4 and 5-11).

▣ **"Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised"** This is translated by NASB as a JUSSIVE (BDB 1074, KB 1779, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense), as should Ps. 10:15b.

This expresses a typical OT motif of "role reversal." What is expected does not occur because of God's presence.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:3-4

³For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire,

And the greedy man curses *and* spurns the LORD.

⁴The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek *Him*.

All his thoughts are, "There is no God."

10:3-4 This strophe further describes (1) pagans, (2) atheists, or at least (3) the "practical atheism" of the psalmist's enemies (i.e., other Israelites).

1. curses the LORD – but a few times in the sense of "curse," (lit. "bless," BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. 1 Kgs. 21:10,13; Job 1:5; 2:9)

2. spurns the LORD – BDB 610, KB 658, *Piel* PERFECT

3. does not seek the LORD – BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* IMPERFECT

4. assumes there is no God – “no,” BDB 34 II, “God,” BDB 43 (phrase has no VERB), cf. Ps. 10:5a,11; 14:1; 53:1; this is not a philosophical issue but a practical issue. Everyone in the ANE believed in a spiritual realm. JPSOA translates the phrase as “God does not care.”

10:3a The fall of Genesis 3 has turned the heart of the creature away from the Creator and onto himself/herself. Our lives are spent seeking selfish things, positions, and power. Augustine put it well when he wrote about every human being created with a God-shaped hole. Nothing but God can fill that need but fallen humanity tries to fill it with temporal/earthly things.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:5-11

⁵His ways prosper at all times;
Your judgments are on high, out of his sight;
As for all his adversaries, he snorts at them.
⁶He says to himself, “I will not be moved;
Throughout all generations I will not be in adversity.”
⁷His mouth is full of curses and deceit and oppression;
Under his tongue is mischief and wickedness.
⁸He sits in the lurking places of the villages;
In the hiding places he kills the innocent;
His eyes stealthily watch for the unfortunate.
⁹He lurks in a hiding place as a lion in his lair;
He lurks to catch the afflicted;
He catches the afflicted when he draws him into his net.
¹⁰He crouches, he bows down,
And the unfortunate fall by his mighty ones.
¹¹He says to himself, “God has forgotten;
He has hidden His face; He will never see it.”

10:5-11 This strophe describes the seeming unfairness of life. The wicked prosper and the righteous suffer! The same issue is addressed in the book of Job, Psalm 73, and Habakkuk. The wicked are characterized as:

1. prospers at all times – the VERB (BDB 298 II, KB 311, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is lit. “be firm,” but is used in the sense of wealth, cf. Gen. 34:29; Num. 31:9; Deut. 8:17,18; Job 5:5; 15:29; 20:15,18; 31:25; Ps. 49:6,10; 62:10; 73:12; Isa. 8:4; 10:14; 30:6; 60:5; 61:6; Micah 4:13
2. snorts at his adversaries – BDB 806, KB 916, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, this sense is found only here but the word is often used of liars in Proverbs (cf. Pro. 6:19; 14:5,25; 19:5,9)
3. I shall not be moved – BDB 556, KB 555, *Niphal* IMPERFECT meaning my situation of prosperity and safety will never be changed
4. his mouth is full of (i.e., the mouth reveals the heart; Paul quotes this verse in his litany of OT texts that reveal the universality of human sin, cf. Rom. 3:14)
 - a. curses
 - b. deceit
 - c. oppression
 - d. mischief
 - e. wickedness
5. he ambushes the innocent like a wild animal (cf. Ps. 10:8-10; Lam. 3:10-11)

6. he believes and asserts the very words of the psalmist from v. 1. God is absent and irrelevant! The psalmist's words were a cry of faith, but these are the assertions of an unbeliever (cf. Ps. 39:1-2).

10:5b This line of poetry refers to God as far away and irrelevant (cf. vv. 4b,11).

10:8 “villages” This does not seem to fit the context. NJB changes the vowels to “of the rushes” (UBS Text Project, p. 174, gives “village” a “B” rating, meaning “some doubt”). The NET Bible translates it as “near the villages” (MT, “in the villages”).



NASB, REB	“unfortunate”
NASB margin	“poor”
NKJV, NRSV	“helpless”
JPSOA	“hapless”
LXX	“needy”

This ADJECTIVE (BDB 319, KB 319) occurs only in this chapter in the Psalms, and only three times in all the OT. I think all three uses refer to a person being attacked.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:12-15

- ¹²Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up Your hand.
Do not forget the afflicted.
¹³Why has the wicked spurned God?
He has said to himself, “You will not require *it*.”
¹⁴You have seen *it*, for You have beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Your hand.
The unfortunate commits *himself* to You;
You have been the helper of the orphan.
¹⁵Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoer,
Seek out his wickedness until You find none.

10:12 This verse describes the stealth (*Qere*) of a wild animal seeking prey.

10:12-15 This is a prayer for God to act.

1. arise – (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) from Your throne or as the Divine Warrior
2. lift up Your hand – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. do not forget the afflicted – BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 9:12 and 19 contrast Ps. 10:11!
4. break the arm of the wicked – BDB 990, KB 1402, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (i.e., break the power of this/these evil person/people)
5. seek out – BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

The psalmist wants God to act on behalf of the faithful believer to show the unbeliever his/her folly!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:16-18

- ¹⁶The LORD is King forever and ever;
Nations have perished from His land.
¹⁷O LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble;
You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear

**¹⁸To vindicate the orphan and the oppressed,
So that man who is of the earth will no longer cause terror.**

10:16-18 This strophe affirms the character of the God of Israel, the Creator, Redeemer God.

1. YHWH is King forever and ever (cf. Exod. 15:18; Ps. 9:7; 29:10; 146:10; Jer. 10:10; Lam. 5:19). For “forever” see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5.
2. YHWH gave the Israelites the land of Canaan (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). The focus on “the nations” resumes the thought from Ps. 9:17-20.
3. YHWH hears and acts on behalf of the humble/afflicted believer (note the PERFECT, YHWH will and does hear).
4. YHWH acts on behalf of the socially powerless and vulnerable (i.e., reflects Deuteronomy).
5. YHWH will remove the arrogant unbeliever and his/her deeds from the earth.

See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God at Ps. 9:10b.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is verse 4 describing an atheist?
2. What is the person of verse 6 asserting?
3. What is the person of verses 11 and 13b asserting?
4. How is verse 18 related to Deuteronomy?

PSALM 11

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD a Refuge and Defense	Faith in the LORD'S Righteousness	Confidence in God's Concern for Justice	Confidence in the LORD	The Confidence of the Upright
<u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director. A psalm of David"				
11:1-3	11:1-3	11:1-3	11:1-3	11:1
				11:2-3
11:4-7	11:4-6	11:4-7	11:4-5	11:4
				11:5-6
			11:6-7	
	11:7			11:7

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:1-3

¹In the LORD I take refuge;
How can you say to my soul, "Flee as a bird to your mountain;
²For, behold, the wicked bend the bow,
They make ready their arrow upon the string
To shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.

**³If the foundations are destroyed,
What can the righteous do?”**

11:1 “refuge” See notes at Ps. 2:12; 5:11. This (BDB 340, KB 337, *Qal* PERFECT) is a wonderful recurrent metaphor of protection and security (cf. Ps. 34:22; 37:40; Ezek. 7:15-16).

David’s advisors (or enemies) said, “run” (v. 1b), but David said, “why run?” (vv. 1a, 2-3). God is our refuge and He knows what we are going through. He is with us and for us. Look at Him and not the circumstances!

▣ **“flee as a bird to your mountain”** The MT has the PLURAL (BDB 626, KB 678, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), but the *Qere* reading is SINGULAR.

It seems that the wicked (i.e., PLURAL VERB) are addressing the faithful to flee to YHWH’s protection (i.e., “refuge” and “mountain” are parallel, cf. Ps. 121:1). The phrase is, therefore, a taunt.

The UBS *Handbook* says verses 1 and 4 occur at the temple and, therefore, it is the psalmist’s friends/co-worshippers who call on him to flee in silence to a desert fortress.

I think “the foundations” of Ps. 11:3 is also parallel to “refuge” and “mountains.” They refer to the presence and truth of YHWH (cf. Ps. 87:1; 119:152) with His people, which the wicked deny.

11:2-3 It is possible to view these verses in two ways.

1. the advice of (a) the wicked or (b) friends at worship continue through v. 3
2. the psalmist answers those who call on him to flee in v. 1b

11:2 This describes the malicious activity and plans of the wicked.

1. bend the bow – BDB 201, KB 131, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 7:12; 37:14
2. make ready the arrow – BDB 465, KB 464, *Polel* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 64:3
3. shoot – BDB 434, KB 436, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. Ps. 64:6

▣ **“the upright in heart”** There are no sinless humans. However, there are obviously two kinds.

1. those who seek YHWH and live to please Him
2. those who live for themselves as if there were no covenant or covenant God

11:3 The righteous person’s only hope is the truth and presence of YHWH. He is the only source of help! If there is no God (cf. Ps. 10:4; 14:1; 36:1) then the faithful follower is the fool, but if there is an ethical Creator before whom all conscious life must stand and give an account (cf. v. 4b-f), then the disobedient, wicked, self-centered human (pagan or Israelite) is the fool!

There is a possibility that the second line of v. 3 refers to God (i.e., “the Just One,” cf. AB, p. 69, and footnote in Jewish Study Bible, p. 1294). See Ps. 11:5, where YHWH and righteous (BDB 843) may be in opposition; both are titles for the God of Israel.

▣ **“foundations”** The etymology of this word/root, נש (BDB 1011, KB 1666-1667). It is a rare word but consensus is that it refers to the covenant laws. KB has the latest scholarly speculations.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:4-7

**⁴The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD’S throne is in heaven;
His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.**

**⁵The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked,
And the one who loves violence His soul hates.**

**⁶Upon the wicked He will rain snares;
 Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup.
⁷For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness;
 The upright will behold His face.**

11:4-7 This strophe answers the implied question of the wicked in Ps. 11:1b. As it happens, “the foundations” of v. 3b are not destroyed!

11:4 YHWH dwells in heaven (see Special Topic at Ps. 8:1), but He manifests Himself (i.e., makes Himself available) between the wings of the *Cherubim* over the ark of the covenant (cf. Isa. 66:1). Heaven and earth meet in the Holy of Holies in the temple in Jerusalem.

11:4b-5a YHWH knows (IMPERFECTS which denote characteristic actions)

1. what happens on earth
2. the motives of the human heart

He tests (BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Job 7:18; Ps. 7:9; 26:2; 139:1,23) the sins of men (*ben Adam*), both the righteous and the wicked. The NT records the event in Matt. 12:36-37; 16:27; 25:31-46; Acts 10:42; Rom. 2:16; 14:10,12; 1 Pet. 4:5; and Rev. 20:11-15. God’s testing is both in time (temporal) and beyond time (eschatological). Often we do reap in this life what we sow, but if not, a day is coming!

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD TESTS HIS PEOPLE

The term “test” (BDB 650, KB 702, *Piel* PERFECT) is used in the sense of “to try.” It is used in the sense of bringing someone to the place whereby they recognize and act on their own stated priorities. It is obvious from Genesis 12 through 22 that God is presenting Abraham with a series of situations (the rabbis say ten) in order to focus his love and trust into God and God alone. These tests were not so much for God’s sake, but for Abraham’s sake and his understanding of the God who called him out of Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham is asked to give up family, home, friends, inheritance, tradition and even the future (his promised son) to follow God by faith. God tests all of His children in the area of their priority (cf. Matt. 4:1ff; Heb. 5:8; 12:5-13).

God tests (BDB 650) in order to know (BDB 393). Israel often tested God by their disobedience and God proved to be true to His word. Now God will give Israel and her people a chance to demonstrate their spoken allegiance and faith.

1. God tested His people corporately
 - a. Exod. 15:25; 16:4; 20:20
 - b. Deut. 8:2,16; 13:3
 - c. Jdgs. 2:22; 3:1,4
2. God tested individual Israelites
 - a. Abraham, Gen. 12:1-12
 - b. Hezekiah, II Chr. 32:31
3. The Psalm writers cry out for God to test them so as to remove any hidden flaws (cf. 26:2; 139:23).
4. The NT people of God are equally tested, as was Jesus (Matthew 4; Luke 4; Heb. 5:8).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THAT DAY

This phrase, “in that day” or “on that day,” is a way for the eighth century prophets to speak of God’s visitation (presence), both for judgment and restoration.

Hosea		Amos		Micah	
<u>positive</u>	<u>negative</u>	<u>positive</u>	<u>negative</u>	<u>positive</u>	<u>negative</u>
1:11	1:5		1:14 (2)		2:4
	2:3		2:16		3:6
2:15			3:14	4:6	
			5:18 (2)		
			5:20		
2:16			6:3		5:10
2:21	3:18 (2)		8:3		7:4
	5:9		8:9 (2)	7:11 (2)	
	7:5		8:10	7:12	
	9:5	9:11	8:13		
	10:14				

This pattern is typical of the prophets. God is going to act against sin in time, but He also offers a day of repentance and forgiveness to those who change their hearts and actions! God’s purpose of redemption and restoration will be accomplished! He will have a people who reflect His character. The purpose of creation (fellowship between God and humanity) will be fulfilled!

11:5 “His soul hates” This is anthropomorphic language. See Special Topic at Ps. 2:4-6. See Exod. 15:9; Isa. 1:14; Jer. 5:9,29; 6:8; 9:9; 32:41; Ezek. 23:18 for the same use of *nephesh* (BDB 659, see note at Ps. 3:2).

It is possible that this verse deals with only the wicked and that “the righteous” is a title for God (cf. Ps. 11:3b). If so, YHWH and “the Just One” are in apposition (cf. 11:3b, 7a).

The OT lists several things YHWH hates.

1. idolatry – Deut. 12:31; 16:22; Jer. 44:4; Hos. 9:15
2. all who do iniquity – Ps. 5:5
3. one who loves violence – Ps. 11:5
- 4-9. see lists in Pro. 6:10-19 (also note Zech. 8:16-17)
10. the false, sham worship of Israel – Isa. 1:14; Amos 5:1; 6:8
11. divorce – Mal. 2:16

11:6

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, NJB,

LXX

NET Bible

“He will rain”

“May the LORD rain down”

The VERB (BDB 565, KB 574) is a JUSSIVE which the NET Bible and the Anchor Bible translate accurately, but the other translations assume it is JUSSIVE in form but not in meaning.



NASB, MT,

LXX

“snares”

NASB margin

“coals of fire”

NKJV, NRSV,

TEV, NJB,

JPSOA

“coals”

The context seems to demand an emendation from “snares,” חִיּוֹט (BDB 809) to “coals,” פַּחַמִּי (BDB 809). The UBS Text Project gives “snares” a “B” rating.

11:6b Does this refer to

1. hyperbolic poetic imagery about the circumstances of this life
2. the reality of judgment in the afterlife (cf. Deut. 32:22)

See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Ps. 1:6.

▣ **“fire”** This is a recurrent metaphor of judgment and cleansing.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

Fire has both positive and negative connotations in Scripture.

A. Positive

1. warms (cf. Isa. 44:15; John 18:18)
2. lights (cf. Isa. 50:11; Matt. 25:1-13)
3. cooks (cf. Exod. 12:8; Isa. 44:15-16; John 21:9)
4. purifies (cf. Num. 31:22-23; Pro. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; 6:6-8; Jer. 6:29; Mal. 3:2-3)
5. holiness (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Ezek. 1:27; Heb. 12:29)
6. God’s leadership (cf. Exod. 13:21; Num. 14:14; 1 Kgs. 18:24)
7. God’s empowering (cf. Acts 2:3)
8. protection (cf. Zech. 2:5)

B. Negative

1. burns (cf. Jos. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Matt. 22:7)
2. destroys (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1-2)
3. anger (cf. Num. 21:28; Isa. 10:16; Zech. 12:6)
4. punishment (cf. Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Jos. 7:15)
5. false eschatological sign (cf. Rev. 13:13)

C. God’s anger against sin is expressed in fire metaphors

1. His anger burns (cf. Hos. 8:5; Zeph. 3:8)
2. He pours out fire (cf. Nah. 1:6)
3. eternal fire (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4)
4. eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 3:10; 13:40; John 15:6; 2 Thess. 1:7; 2 Pet. 3:7-10; Rev. 8:7; 16:8)

D. Like so many metaphors in the Bible (i.e., leaven, lion) fire can be a blessing or a curse depending on the context.



NASB, NKJV
NRSV, TEV,
NJB, JPSOA,
REB
LXX
NET

“burning wind”

“scorching wind”

“a wind of a tempest”

“whirlwind”

This rare term (BDB 273) basically means “heat.” It is used in

1. Psalm 11:6 – describing a wind
2. Psalm 119:53 – as burning indignation
3. Lamentation 5:10 – as burning famine

The interpretive question is, “Does this term continue the series of NOUNS (BDB 809, 77, 172, cf. Job 1:16) or start a new metaphor?”

1. destructive whirlwind (cf. Ps. 58:9; Pro. 1:27; Hos. 8:7; Amos 1:14; Nah. 1:3)
2. hot desert wind (cf. Ps. 90:56; 103:15-16)

▣ **“their cup”** This is a Hebrew idiom for a person’s destiny, usually negative (cf. Ps. 75:8, but occasionally positive, cf. Ps. 16:5). It is associated with drunkenness (cf. Isa. 51:17; Jer. 25:15).

This same idiom was used by Jesus in

1. Matt. 20:22; Mark 10:38,39
2. Matt. 26:39,42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42
3. John 18:11

11:7 YHWH is characterized as righteous (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5, cf. Exod. 9:27; Ezra 9:15; Neh. 9:8; Ps. 119:137; Jer. 12:1; Lam. 1:18; John 17:25; Rev. 16:5,7).

Some of the actions of the righteous God are:

1. He tests the hearts of men – Ps. 7:9; 11:5; Jer. 20:12
2. He judges in righteousness – Ps. 7:11
3. He loves righteousness – Ps. 11:7; 33:5; 146:8
4. He is gracious and righteous – Ps. 116:5
5. He cuts the cords of the wicked – Ps. 129:4
6. He is righteous in all His ways – Ps. 145:7; Dan. 9:14

11:7b “The upright will behold His face” One wonders if this is the source of Jesus’ words in Matt. 5:8. God is holy (Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48). No one can see God and live (i.e., Exod. 33:11,17-23), yet those who are pronounced righteous in Him/Jesus will have intimate fellowship with Deity (cf. Job 19:25-27; 27:4; Ps. 17:15; Matt. 5:8; 1 John 3:2)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What does “take refuge” mean?
2. Explain verse 3 in your own words.
3. From verse 4, where is YHWH, heaven or the temple?
4. Does YHWH test humans (v. 5)?
How and why?

PSALM 12

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God a Helper Against the Treacherous	Man's Treachery and God's Constancy	Prayer for Deliverance from Personal Enemies (A Lament)	Prayer for Help	Against a Treacherous World
<u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director; upon an eight-stringed lyre. A psalm of David"				
12:1-5	12:1-2	12:1-2	12:1-2	12:1-2
	12:3-5	12:3-4	12:3-4	12:3-5
		12:5-6	12:5	
12:6-8	12:6-7		12:6	12:6
		12:7-8	12:7-8	12:7-8
	12:8			

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:1-5

¹Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases to be,
For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.

²They speak falsehood to one another;
With flattering lips and with a double heart they speak.

³May the LORD cut off all flattering lips,

The tongue that speaks great things;

⁴Who have said, “With our tongue we will prevail;

Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?”

⁵“Because of the devastation of the afflicted, because of the groaning of the needy,

Now I will arise,” says the LORD; “I will set him in the safety for which he longs.”

12:1 “Help, LORD” What a powerful cry for help (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE). In the OT this term has the implication of physical deliverance but in the NT it takes on the emphasis of spiritual salvation. See Special Topic: Salvation in the OT at Ps. 13:5-6.

I have often thought how sad it would be for someone to be physically delivered (i.e., health, war, financial) but miss the joy and benefit of spiritual deliverance! In the NT healing did not always result in a spiritual transformation. What humans need most is God, not a change of circumstances!

▣ **“for the godly man ceases to be”** Notice the parallelism between line 1 and line 2. These both speak of the death of faithful followers. This is a corporate lament, although the LXX has “me” in 12:1-2.

For “faithful” (BDB 52 I) see Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (אמן)

I. Opening Statement

It needs to be stated that the use of this theological concept, so crucial to the NT, is not as clearly defined in the OT. It is surely there, but demonstrated in key selected passages and persons.

The OT blends

A. the individual and the community

B. the personal encounter and covenant obedience

Faith is both personal encounter and daily lifestyle! It is easier to describe in a person than in a lexical form (i.e., word study). This personal aspect is best illustrated in

A. Abraham and his seed

B. David and Israel

These men met/encountered God and their lives were permanently changed (not perfect lives, but continuing faith). Testing revealed weaknesses and strengths of their faith encounter with God, but the intimate, trusting relationship continued through time! It was tested and refined, but it continued as evidenced by their devotion and lifestyle.

II. Main root used

A. אמן (BDB 52)

1. VERB

a. *Qal* stem – to support, to nourish (i.e., 2 Kgs. 10:1,5; Esther 2:7, the non-theological usage)

b. *Niphal* stem – to make sure or firm, to establish, to confirm, to be faithful or trustworthy

(1) of men, Isa. 8:2; 53:1; Jer. 40:14

(2) of things, Isa. 22:23

(3) of God, Deut. 7:9; Isa. 49:7; Jer. 42:5

c. *Hiphil* stem – to stand firm, to believe, to trust

(1) Abraham believed God, Gen. 15:6

- (2) the Israelites in Egypt believed, Exod. 4:31; 14:31 (negated in Deut. 1:32)
 - (3) Israelites believed YHWH spoke through Moses, Exod. 19:9; Ps. 106:12,24
 - (4) Ahaz did not trust in God, Isa 7:9
 - (5) whoever believes in it/him, Isa. 28:16
 - (6) believe truths about God, Isa. 43:10-12
- 2. NOUN (MASCULINE) – faithfulness (i.e., Deut. 32:20; Isa. 25:1; 26:2)
- 3. ADVERB – truly, verily, I agree, may it be so (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; 1 Kgs. 1:36; 1 Chr. 16:36; Isa. 65:16; Jer. 11:5; 28:6). This is the liturgical use of “amen” in the OT and NT.
- B. אֱמֶת (BDB 54) FEMININE NOUN, firmness, faithfulness, truth
 - 1. of men, Isa. 10:20; 42:3; 48:1
 - 2. of God, Exod. 34:6; Ps. 117:2; Isa. 38:18,19; 61:8
 - 3. of truth, Deut. 32:4; 1 Kgs. 22:16; Ps. 33:4; 98:3; 100:5; 119:30; Jer. 9:5; Zech. 8:16
- C. אֱמוּנָה (BDB 53), firmness, steadfastness, fidelity
 - 1. of hands, Exod. 17:12
 - 2. of times, Isa. 33:6
 - 3. of humans, Jer. 5:3; 7:28; 9:2
 - 4. of God, Ps. 40:11; 88:12; 89:1,2,5,8; 119:138

III. Paul’s use of this OT concept

- A. Paul bases his new understanding of YHWH and the OT on his personal encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9; 22; 26).
- B. He found OT support for his new understanding in two key OT passages which use the root אֱמֶן.
 - 1. Gen. 15:6 – Abram’s personal encounter initiated by God (Genesis 12) resulted in an obedient life of faith (Genesis 12-22). Paul alludes to this in Romans 4 and Galatians 3.
 - 2. Isa. 28:16 – those who believe in it (i.e., God’s tested and firmly placed cornerstone) will never be
 - a. Rom. 9:33, “put to shame” or “be disappointed”
 - b. Rom. 10:11, same as above
 - 3. Hab. 2:4 – those who know the faithful God should live faithful lives (cf. Jer. 7:28). Paul uses this text in Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11 (also note Heb. 10:38).

IV. Peter’s use of the OT concept

- A. Peter combines
 - 1. Isa. 8:14 – 1 Pet. 2:8 (stumbling block)
 - 2. Isa. 28:16 – 1 Pet. 2:6 (cornerstone)
 - 3. Ps. 118:22 – 1 Pet 2:7 (rejected stone)
- B. He turns the unique language that describes Israel, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession” from
 - 1. Deut. 10:15; Isa. 43:21
 - 2. Isa. 61:6; 66:21
 - 3. Exod. 19:6; Deut. 7:6
 and now uses it for the church’s faith in Christ

V. John's use of the concept

A. Its NT usage

The term "believe" is from the Greek term (*pisteuō*), which can also be translated "believe," "faith," or "trust." For example, the NOUN does not occur in the Gospel of John, but the VERB is used often. In John 2:23-25 there is uncertainty as to the genuineness of the crowd's commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Other examples of this superficial use of the term "believe" are in John 8:31-59 and Acts 8:13, 18-24. True biblical faith is more than an initial response. It must be followed by a process of discipleship (cf. Matt. 13:20-22, 31-32).

B. Its use with PREPOSITIONS

1. *eis* means "into." This unique construction emphasizes believers putting their trust/faith in Jesus
 - a. into His name (John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; 1 John 5:13)
 - b. into Him (John 2:11; 3:15,18; 4:39; 6:40; 7:5,31,39,48; 8:30; 9:36; 10:42; 11:45,48; 12:37,42; Matt. 18:6; Acts 10:43; Phil. 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:8)
 - c. into Me (John 6:35; 7:38; 11:25,26; 12:44,46; 14:1,12; 16:9; 17:20)
 - d. into the Son (John 3:36; 9:35; 1 John 5:10)
 - e. into Jesus (John 12:11; Acts 19:4; Gal. 2:16)
 - f. into Light (John 12:36)
 - g. into God (John 14:1)
2. *en* means "in" as in John 3:15; Mark 1:15; Acts 5:14
3. *epi* means "in" or "upon," as in Matt. 27:42; Acts 9:42; 11:17; 16:31; 22:19; Rom. 4:5, 24; 9:33; 10:11; 1 Tim. 1:16; 1 Pet. 2:6
4. the DATIVE CASE with no PREPOSITION as in Gal. 3:6; Acts 18:8; 27:25; 1 John 3:23; 5:10
5. *hoti*, which means "believe that," gives content as to what to believe
 - a. Jesus is the Holy One of God (John 6:69)
 - b. Jesus is the I Am (John 8:24)
 - c. Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 10:38)
 - d. Jesus is the Messiah (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - e. Jesus is the Son of God (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - f. Jesus was sent by the Father (John 11:42; 17:8,21)
 - g. Jesus is one with the Father (John 14:10-11)
 - h. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:27,30)
 - i. Jesus identified Himself in the covenant name of the Father, "I Am" (John 8:24; 13:19)
 - j. We will live with Him (Rom. 6:8)
 - k. Jesus died and rose again (1 Thess. 4:14)

VI. Conclusion

Biblical faith is the human response to a divine word/promise. God always initiates (i.e., John 6:44,65), but part of this divine communication is the need for humans to respond.

A. trust

B. covenant obedience

Biblical faith is

1. a personal relationship (initial faith)
2. an affirmation of biblical truth (faith in God's revelation)

3. an appropriate obedient response to it (daily faith)

Biblical faith is not a ticket to heaven or an insurance policy. It is a personal relationship. This is the purpose of creation and humans being made in the image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) of God. The issue is “intimacy.” God desires fellowship, not a certain theological standing! But fellowship with a holy God demands that the children demonstrate the “family” characteristic (i.e., holiness, cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:15-16). The Fall (cf. Genesis 3) affected our ability to respond appropriately. Therefore, God acted on our behalf (cf. Ezek. 36:27-38), giving us a “new heart” and a “new spirit,” which enables us through faith and repentance to fellowship with Him and obey Him!

All three are crucial. All three must be maintained. The goal is to know God (both Hebrew and Greek senses) and to reflect His character in our lives. The goal of faith is not heaven someday, but Christlikeness every day!

Human faithfulness is the result (NT), not the basis (OT) for a relationship with God: human’s faith in His faithfulness; human’s trust in His trustworthiness. The heart of the NT view of salvation is that humans must respond initially and continually to the initiating grace and mercy of God, demonstrated in Christ. He has loved, He has sent, He has provided; we must respond in faith and faithfulness (cf. Eph. 2:8-9 and 10)!

The faithful God wants a faithful people to reveal Himself to a faithless world and bring them to personal faith in Him.



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

“disappeared”

LXX, NJB,

JPSOA, REB

“vanished”

The “cease to be” of line one is parallel to this word (BDB 821 II), which is found only here in the OT. Some suggest a different root (BDB 67) which is found in Isa. 16:4.

The UBS Text Project (p. 177) offers two ways to understand this VERB.

1. their numbers are greatly reduced (LXX)
2. they have completely disappeared (cf. v. 1a and v. 3a)

12:2-4 Notice the theme of “speaking” (i.e., lips, tongue). The false message of the double-hearted person is contrasted with the true message of YHWH’s revelation (cf. Ps. 12:6).

Every day believers must ascertain which messages they hear are true/false; from fallen humanity/from God (cf. Deut. 13:1-5; 18:14-22; Matthew 7; 1 John 4:1-3)!

12:2 “speak falsehood” This is literally “emptiness” or “vanity” (BDB 996). This “emptiness of speech” is a recurrent theme (cf. Ps. 41:6; 144:8,11; Pro. 30:9; Isa. 59:4; Ezek. 13:8-9; Hos. 10:4).

In some contexts it is used of false testimony (cf. Exod. 20:16; 23:1; Deut. 5:20) in court. In other places it refers to false prophecies (cf. Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 22:28; Zech. 10:2).

One thing is sure, this word characterizes false followers! Their mouths reveal their double heart (cf. v. 2; Matt. 12:34; 15:18; Mark 7:20-23; Luke 6:45; James 3:2-12).

12:3 The psalmist calls on YHWH to silence (lit. “cut off” – BDB 503, KB 500, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE) the

1. flattering lips (lit. “smooth lips,” cf. Ps. 5:9)
2. tongue that speaks great things

12:4 This verse shows the true heart of the “double heart” (lit. “a heart and a heart”). This person is one who does not allow YHWH to control his/her life! This is the essence of fallen humanity’s attitude.

▣ **“Who have said”** The NASB Study Bible (p. 751) reminds us that the psalmist often quotes or alludes to the false words of the wicked (cf. Ps. 3:2 and 10:11; also note 2 Pet. 3:1-4; Jude vv. 18-19).

12:5 YHWH explains why He will “arise” (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERFECT, see full note at Ps. 3:7).

1. because of the devastation of the afflicted
2. because of the groaning (BDB 60 I) of the needy

YHWH is affected by the prayers and circumstances of His people (i.e., Exod. 3:7; 2:25; Neh. 9:9; Isa. 63:9; Acts 7:34). YHWH (unlike the idols) is the God who hears, sees, and acts!

▣ **“safety”** This NOUN (BDB 447) is from the VERB “help” (BDB 446, KB 448) used in verse 1. It seems to be similar to an Arabic root which denotes that which is wide or spacious (cf. Ps. 4:1; 31:8; 118:5). This is the opposite idiom from “narrow” or “stressed.”

▣ **“he longs”** This VERB (BDB 806, KB 916, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) basically means “to breathe” or “to blow out breath.”

1. used of YHWH’s snorting in disgust – Ps. 10:5
2. used of testimony in court – Pro. 6:19; 12:17; 14:5,25; 19:5,9
3. in the cool of the day – Song of Songs 2:17; 4:6
4. used of panting or sighing for something
 - a. place of safety – Ps. 12:5
 - b. vision being fulfilled – Hab. 2:3

The LXX translates this line of poetry as YHWH speaking, “I will place in safety; I will speak freely against it (or ‘him’).” The JPSOA has “I will give help, He affirms him.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:6-8

⁶The words of the LORD are pure words;
As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times.
⁷You, O LORD, will keep them;
You will preserve him from this generation forever.
⁸The wicked strut about on every side
When vileness is exalted among the sons of men.

12:6-8 Contrast the revelation of YHWH with the worthless attitude of the wicked. YHWH’s message is characterized as

1. pure words (cf. Ps. 19:8; 119:140)
2. refined silver (Ps. 18:30; Pro. 30:5)

He is faithful to His word (cf. v. 7). The wicked reveal themselves by their words and actions (cf. Matt. 7:15-23,24-27).

12:6

NASB “a furnace on the earth”
NKJV “a furnace of earth”
NRSV “a furnace on the ground”
NJB “which comes from the earth”

JPSOA “an earthen crucible”

REB “tested for soil”

The word translated “furnace” (BDB 760, KB 833) is found only here in the OT. Many scholars believe it is a technical term from metallurgy denoting an earthen mold in the ground made from dirt or clay.

The MT has “to the ground” or “on the ground,” which seems to refer to an earthen mold into which the refined silver is poured.

▣ **“seven times”** Seven is the symbolic number of perfection which originated from the seven days of creation in Genesis 1-2.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE

- A. Certain numbers functioned both as numerals and symbols.
1. One – God (e.g., Deut. 6:4; Eph. 4:4-6)
 2. Four – the whole earth (i.e., four corners, four winds)
 3. Six – human imperfection (one less than 7, e.g., Rev. 13:18)
 4. Seven – divine perfection (the seven days of creation). Notice the symbolic usages in Revelation:
 - a. seven candlesticks, Rev. 1:12,20; 2:1
 - b. seven stars, Rev. 1:16,20; 2:1
 - c. seven churches, Rev. 1:20
 - d. seven spirits of God, Rev. 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
 - e. seven lamps, Rev. 4:5
 - f. seven seals, Rev. 5:1,5
 - g. seven horns and seven eyes, Rev. 5:6
 - h. seven angels, Rev. 8:2,6; 15:1,6,7,8; 16:1; 17:1
 - i. seven trumpets, Rev. 8:2,6
 - j. seven thunders, Rev. 10:3,4
 - k. seven thousand, Rev. 11:13
 - l. seven heads, Rev. 13:1; 17:3,7,9
 - m. seven plagues, Rev. 15:1,6,8; 21:9
 - n. seven bowls, Rev. 15:7; 21:9
 - o. seven kings, Rev. 17:10
 5. Ten – completeness
 - a. use in Gospels
 - (1) Matt. 20:24; 25:1,28
 - (2) Mark 10:41
 - (3) Luke 14:31; 15:8; 17:12,17; 19:13,16,17,24,25
 - b. use in Revelation
 - (1) 2:10, ten days of tribulation
 - (2) 12:3; 17:3,7,12,16, ten horns
 - (3) 13:1, ten crowns

- c. multiples of 10 in Revelation
 - (1) 144,000 = $12 \times 12 \times 1000$, cf. 7:4; 14:1,3
 - (2) 1,000 = $10 \times 10 \times 10$, cf. 20:2,3,6
 - 6. Twelve – human organization
 - a. twelve sons of Jacob (i.e., twelve tribes of Israel, Gen. 35:22; 49:28)
 - b. twelve pillars, Exod. 24:4
 - c. twelve stones on breastplate of High Priest, Exod. 28:21; 39:14
 - d. twelve loaves, for table in Holy Place (symbolic of God's provision for the twelve tribes), Lev. 24:5; Exod. 25:30
 - e. twelve spies, Deut. 1:23; Jos. 3:22; 4:2,3,4,8,9,20
 - f. twelve apostles, Matt. 10:1
 - g. use in Revelation
 - (1) twelve thousand sealed, 7:5-8
 - (2) twelve stars, 12:1
 - (3) twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, 21:12
 - (4) twelve foundation stones, names of the twelve apostles, 21:14
 - (5) New Jerusalem was twelve thousand stadia squared, 21:16
 - (6) twelve gates made of twelve pearls, 21:12
 - (7) tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, 22:2
 - 7. Forty – number for time
 - a. sometimes literal (exodus and wilderness wanderings, e.g., Exod. 16:35); Deut. 2:7; 8:2
 - b. can be literal or symbolic
 - (1) flood, Gen. 7:4,17; 8:6
 - (2) Moses on Mt. Sinai, Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9,11,18,25
 - (3) divisions of Moses life:
 - (a) forty years in Egypt
 - (b) forty years in the desert
 - (c) forty years leading Israel
 - (4) Jesus fasted forty days, Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2
 - c. Note (by means of a Concordance) the number of times this number appears in time designation in the Bible!
 - 8. Seventy – round number for people
 - a. Israel, Exod. 1:5
 - b. seventy elders, Exod. 24:1,9
 - c. eschatological, Dan. 9:2,24
 - d. mission team, Luke 10:1,17
 - e. forgiveness (70×7), Matt. 18:22
- B. Good references
1. John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology*
 2. D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*

12:7 “protect. . .guard” These VERBS (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT and BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERFECT) are used many times in the Psalms to express the psalmist’s cry for YHWH’s presence to avail against the opponents or circumstances.

▣ **“from this generation”** This phrase in Psalm 12 refers to those who

1. speak falsehood, v. 2
2. have flattering lips, v. 2
3. have a double heart, v. 2
4. speak great things about themselves, vv. 3-4
5. devastate the needy, v. 5
6. are the wicked who strut about, v. 8

▣ **“forever”** This may be a title for YHWH, “the Eternal One” (AB, p. 75). If so, it parallels YHWH in the previous line of poetry.

12:8

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

“vileness”

NJB

“depravity”

JPSOA

“baseness”

REB

“of little worth”

This NOUN (BDB 273) is found only here in the OT. The VERB form (NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 1109) means

1. in *Qal*, “be frivolous” or “be despised”
2. in *Hiphil*, “to treat lightly”

If one tries to see how the two lines of v. 8 form a synonymous parallelism, other textual emendations have been suggested.

1. revocalization – “hold vile”
2. different supposed root – “pit”
3. emendation – “stolen goods” (cf. LXX)
4. emendation – “astral bodies”

It seems best in this etymological issue involving rare words, to let

1. the meaning of the whole Psalm
2. the central truth of the strophe
3. the possible parallelism of the lines
4. possible cognate roots

give us the best guess!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is a double heart (v. 2)?
2. What does verse 4 mean?
3. Why are a person's words so important?

PSALM 13

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Help in Trouble	Trust in the Salvation of the LORD	Prayer for Deliverance from Personal Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer for Help	A Confident Appeal
<u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director. A Psalm of David"				
13:1-2	13:1-2	13:1-2	13:1-2	13:1-3
13:3-4	13:3-4	13:3-4	13:3-4	
				13:4-5 (6)
13:5-6	13:5-6	13:5-6	13:5-6	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:1-2

- ¹How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me?
²How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

13:1-2 Notice the structure of this introductory strophe is four “how long” (BDB 723 II, cf. Ps. 6:3; 90:13) questions.

1. two in verse 1
2. two in verse 2

They are a literary way of expressing the psalmist’s frustration at his current circumstances. He felt abandoned by God.

1. forgotten by God, v. 1a
2. God has hidden Himself, v. 1b
3. personal sorrow, v. 2a,b
4. his enemy is exalted, v. 2c

Notice #1 and #2 also appear together in Ps. 10:11. The theme of a sense of abandonment is beautifully expressed in Psalm 42. The sense of abandonment is only the perception of the hurting psalmist. The reality is YHWH is with us, for us, and will act on our behalf in appropriate, timely ways!

13:1 “forever” This word (BDB 664) is a hyperbolic idiom expressing the psalmist’s feelings of being permanently abandoned by God.

▣ **“face”** This, too, is a Hebrew idiom of personal presence (cf. Ps. 11:7; 17:15; 27:4,8). For some reason (i.e., personal sin, cf. Ps. 13:3b or illness, 3b) YHWH has seemingly turned away.

13:2 “soul. . .heart” These two are parallel and denote Hebrew ways of personifying the person.

▣ **“all the day”** This idiom means “all the time.” This does not mean that the sorrow lasts only during daylight hours.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:13-4

³**Consider *and* answer me, O LORD my God;
Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the *sleep of death*,**
⁴**And my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,”
And my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken.**

13:3-4 This strophe is a prayer for God to answer his prayer questions of vv. 1-2.

There is a series of three IMPERATIVES (i.e., prayer requests).

1. consider (lit. “look”) – BDB 613, KB 661, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 80:14; Lam. 1:11; 2:20; 5:1
2. answer – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. enlighten (lit. “cause to shine”) – BDB 21, KB 24, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE; this may be used in the sense of
 - a. God answer my prayer with knowledge of your revelation (cf. Ps. 6:7; 19:8)
 - b. God deliver me from death (cf. Ps. 38:10)

Also notice that NASB has “lest” three times (MT, BDB 814, twice).

1. lest I die
2. lest my enemy brag
3. lest my adversaries rejoice

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:5-6

⁵But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness;
My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.
⁶I will sing to the LORD,
Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

13:5-6 This is the psalmist's declaration of faith/trust/belief in YHWH.

1. I have trusted (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PERFECT) in Your lovingkindness (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7). Trust is a crucial aspect of a true believer (cf. Ps. 25:5; 42:5; 65:5; 78:22; 86:2). See full note at Ps. 4:5.
2. I will rejoice (BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* JUSSIVE) in Your salvation (see Special Topic at Ps. 3:7), which in context, refers to health restored.
3. I will sing (BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* COHORTATIVE).

In Hebrew thought death was a descent into *Sheol*, where no one praises God (cf. Ps. 6:5; 30:9; 88:10-12; 115:17; Isa. 38:18). See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Ps. 1:6. See notes at 6:5 and 9:13.

The psalmist bases his trust on YHWH's character and actions (i.e., "dealt bountifully with me," BDB 168, KB 197, *Qal* PERFECT).

13:6 "has dealt bountifully with me" This VERB (BDB 168, KB 197, *Qal* PERFECT) is used several times in Psalms (cf. Ps. 116:7; 119:17; 142:7). This PERFECT form denotes the psalmist's certainty that YHWH will act on his behalf in the future and, therefore, states it as if it had already occurred.

▣ **"with me"** Interestingly the LXX translates this as a title for God—"the Most High" (cf. NJB). This same change may also occur at Ps. 7:8.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Verses 1-2 describe how faithful followers feel in a fallen world. Explain this in your own words.
2. Is death a "sleep"?
3. Define and explain "lovingkindness."
4. How does the word "salvation" change meanings from the OT to the NT?

PSALM 14

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Folly and Wickedness of Men	Folly of the Godless and God's Final Triumph	Condemnation of a Cynical and Unrighteous Age (cf. Psalm 53)	Human Wickedness (cf. Psalm 53)	The Fate of the Godless
<u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director. A Psalm of David"				
14:1-3	14:1	14:1	14:1	14:1
	14:2-3	14:2	14:2-3	14:2
		14:3		14:3
14:4-6	14:4-6	14:4-6	14:4	14:4
			14:5-6	14:5-6
14:7	14:7	14:7	14:7	14:7

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:1-3

¹The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."

They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds;

There is no one who does good.

²The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men

To see if there are any who understand,

Who seek after God.

³They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt;
There is no one who does good, not even one.

14:1 “fool” This psalm is almost exactly like Psalm 53. This word (BDB 614 I) refers to people who should know YHWH but choose to live as if He does not affect their lives. There were no atheists in the philosophical sense in the ANE, but many of the covenant people were practical atheists (cf. Deut. 32:6,21; 2 Sam. 13:13; Ps. 10:4,11,13; 53:1; 74:22; Ezek. 13:3). The proverb of Luke 12:48 surely applies to these people.

▣ Notice how “the fool” is characterized.

1. they are corrupt – BDB 1007, KB 1469, *Hiphil* PERFECT (i.e., a settled condition)
2. they have committed abominable deeds – BDB 1073, KB 1765, *Hiphil* PERFECT (i.e., a settled condition)

▣ “abominable deeds” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOMINATION (OT)

“Abominations” (BDB 1072) can refer to several things:

1. things related to Egyptians:
 - a. they loathe eating with Hebrews, Gen. 43:32
 - b. they loathe shepherds, Gen. 46:34
 - c. they loathe Hebrew sacrifices, Exod. 8:26
2. things related to YHWH’s feelings toward Israel’s actions:
 - a. unclean food, Deut. 14:2
 - b. idols, Deut. 7:25; 18:9,12; 27:15
 - c. pagan spiritists, Deut. 18:9,12
 - d. burning children to *Molech*, Lev. 18:21-22; 20:2-5; Deut. 12:31; 18:9,12; 2 Kgs. 16:3; 17:17-18; 21:6; Jer. 32:35
 - e. Canaanite idolatry, Deut. 13:14; 17:4; 20:17-18; 32:16; Isa. 44:19; Jer. 16:18; Ezek. 5:11; 6:9; 11:18,21; 14:6; 16:50; 18:12
 - f. sacrificing blemished animals, Deut. 17:1 (cf. 15:19-23; Mal. 1:12-13)
 - g. sacrificing to idols, Jer. 44:4-5
 - h. remarrying a woman that you had previously divorced, Deut. 24:2
 - i. women wearing man’s clothes (possibly Canaanite worship), Deut. 22:5
 - j. money from cultic prostitution (Canaanite worship), Deut. 23:18
 - k. Israel’s idolatry, Jer. 2:7
 - l. homosexuality (possibly Canaanite worship), Lev. 18:22; 20:13
 - m. use of false weights, Deut. 25:16; Pro. 11:1; 20:23
 - n. food laws violated (possibly Canaanite worship), Deut. 14:3
3. Examples in Wisdom Literature:
 - a. Proverbs 3:32; 6:16-19; 11:1,20; 12:22; 15:8,9,26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 21:27; 28:9
 - b. Psalms 88:8

- c. Job 30:10
- 4. There is a recurrent eschatological phrase “abomination of desolation,” which is used in Daniel (cf. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). It seems to refer to three different occasions (multiple fulfillment prophecy):
 - a. Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the interbiblical Maccabean period (cf. I Macc. 1:54,59; II Macc. 6:1-2)
 - b. the Roman general (later Emperor), Titus, who sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in A.D. 70 (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20)
 - c. an end-time world leader called “the man of lawlessness” (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3-4) or “the Antichrist” (cf. 1 John 2:18; 4:3; Revelation 13)

▣ **“There is no one who does good”** This is a general statement on the spiritual condition of fallen mankind, even the covenant people. It is elaborated on in Ps. 14:2-3. Notice how fallen humanity is characterized.

1. no one does good, vv. 1,3 (inclusive)
2. no one understands
3. no one seeks after God
4. all have turned aside (see note at v. 3)
5. all have become corrupt

One clearly sees the influence of Genesis 3 on all humanity. Paul put together a powerful litany of verses on human rebellion in Rom. 3:9-18,23. He quotes Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-4; 5:9; 140:3; 10:7; Isa. 59:7-8; Ps. 36:1. This truth is the first truth of the gospel (Rom. 1:18-3:18). The gospel is “good news” in light of the bad news!

14:2 “The LORD has looked down from heaven” YHWH was envisioned to dwell in heaven (see Special Topic at Ps. 8:1), from which He sees and knows all that occurs on earth (acts, motives, intents, cf. Ps. 33:13,14; 102:19; Job 28:24). YHWH, so different from the idols, sees, knows, and acts!

14:3 “they have turned aside” YHWH’s covenant was a clearly-marked path/road/way. His people were to stay on this straight (i.e., righteous) and narrow road, but they did not (cf. Exod. 32:8; Deut. 9:12; 11:16; 17:11,17; Jdgs. 2:17; 1 Sam. 12:20; 2 Kgs. 22:2; Jer. 5:23; 17:13; 32:40). The turning away was not an act of ignorance but purposeful rebellion!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:4-6

⁴**Do all the workers of wickedness not know,
Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,
And do not call upon the Lord?**
⁵**There they are in great dread,
For God is with the righteous generation.**
⁶**You would put to shame the counsel of the afflicted,
But the LORD is his refuge.**

14:4-6 This strophe heightens the results of “not knowing” (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6). The actions of the wicked against the poor, needy, and those with no social voice or power will be judged by God, their protector (cf. Deut. 10:17-19; 14:29; 24:17,19-22; 26:12,13; 27:19)!

He is their “refuge” (BDB 340, cf. Ps. 2:12; 5:11; 34:22). To attack them is to attack Him. He will defend them.

14:4

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, LXX “do not call upon the Lord”

TEV “they never pray to me”

NJB, REB “they never call to YHWH”

JPSOA “do not invoke the Lord”

The VERB (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* PERFECT) is a common one used in many ways (i.e., a wide semantic field). In Psalms it has several usages.

1. of priests in ritual and prayer – Ps. 99:6
2. of the prayers of the covenant people – Ps. 4:2; 20:10; 50:15; 86:5; 91:15; 107:6,13; 116:2; 141:1
3. the nations do not call on YHWH (i.e., Ps. 79:6) but Israel does – Ps. 14:4; 50:15; 53:4

In the NT this OT worship phrase (i.e., ritual and prayer) becomes a way of denoting entrance into a relationship with YHWH through Jesus (cf. Acts 2:21; 22:16; Rom. 10:9-13).

We are a called people who call on the name of the Lord and are then called to service! Prayerlessness is a sign of false faith and practical atheism!

14:5 “There they are in great dread” Literally this is “they feared a fear” (*Qal* PERFECT and NOUN of the same root – BDB 808, KB 922).

Since “there” is undefined, some switch it to the end of the phrase and add “where there is no fear” (AB, NJB).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:7

⁷O, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!

When the LORD restores His captive people,

Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad.

14:7 “O, that the salvation of Israel” This is a title for YHWH who dwells in Zion (i.e., Mt. Moriah, the temple). Notice the parallel of “YHWH” in line 2.

This verse is also found in Ps. 53:6, which means it may be proverbial. The LXX makes this first line a question (cf. 53:6).

▣ **“restores”** This same VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427) also can mean “repent” or “turn back.” However, in this context Israel is not called on to repent.

There is a word play between “restores” (BDB 996) and “fortunes” (BDB 986). The footnote in the NET Bible has “turns with a turning (toward) his people.”

▣ **“Jacob. . . Israel”** The Patriarch Jacob had twelve children who became the twelve tribes. Jacob’s name was changed to Israel in Gen. 32:22-32.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ISRAEL (the name)

I. The Name’s meaning is uncertain (BDB 975).

A. *El* Persists

B. Let *El* Persist (JUSSIVE)

- C. *El* Preserves
- D. Let *El* Contend
- E. *El* Strives
- F. He who strives with God (Gen. 32:28)

II. Usages in the OT

- A. Jacob's name (supplanter, heel grabber, BDB 784, cf. Gen. 25:26) is changed after wrestling with the spiritual personage at the river Jabbok (cf. Gen. 32:22-32; Exod. 32:13). Often the meanings of Hebrew names are sound plays, not etymologies (cf. 32:28). Israel becomes his name (e.g., Gen. 35:10).
- B. It came to be used as a collective name for all of his twelve sons (e.g., Gen. 32:32; 49:16; Exod. 1:7; 4:22; 28:11; Deut. 3:18; 10:6).
- C. It came to designate the nation formed by the twelve tribes before the exodus (cf. Gen. 47:27; Exod. 4:22; 5:2) and after (cf. Deut. 1:1; 18:6; 33:10).
- D. After the united monarchy of Saul, David, and Solomon the tribes split under Rehoboam (cf. 1 Kings 12).
 - 1. the distinction starts even before the official split (e.g., 2 Sam. 3:10; 5:5; 20:1; 24:9; 1 Kgs. 1:35; 4:20)
 - 2. designates the northern tribes until the fall of Samaria to Assyria in 722 B.C. (cf. 2 Kings 17).
- E. Used of Judah in a few places (e.g., Isaiah 1; Micah 1:15-16).
- F. After the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles it became again the collective name for all of Jacob's descendants (e.g., Isa. 17:7,9; Jer. 2:4; 50:17,19).
- G. Used of laity in contradistinction from priests (cf. 1 Chr. 9:2; Ezra 10:25; Neh. 11:3).

▣ **“rejoice. . .be glad”** Both of these VERBS denote the result of restoration. VERBS in Hebrew take their time orientation from the context. This context is future.

- 1. rejoice – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* JUSSIVE
- 2. be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. What did the fool mean by his statement, “There is no God”?
- 2. Does the OT teach that all humans are sinful?
- 3. What does it mean “to call upon the LORD”?
- 4. Does verse 7 imply an exile?

PSALM 15

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Description of a Citizen of Zion <u>MT Intro</u> "A Psalm of David"	The Character of Those Who May Dwell with the Lord	A Liturgy for Admission to the Temple	What God Requires	The Guest of Yahweh
15:1-5	15:1	15:1	15:1	15:1
	15:2-5b	15:2-5b	15:2-5b	15:2-3a
				15:3b-4b
				15:4c-5
	15:5c	15:5c	15:5c	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:1-5

¹**O LORD, who may abide in Your tent?**

Who may dwell on Your holy hill?

²**He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness,
And speaks truth in his heart.**

³**He does not slander with his tongue,
Nor does evil to his neighbor,**

**Nor takes up a reproach against his friend;
⁴In whose eyes a reprobate is despised,
 But who honors those who fear the LORD;
 He swears to his own hurt and does not change;
⁵He does not put out his money at interest,
 Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.
 He who does these things will never be shaken.**

15:1 “LORD” This is the covenant name for Deity from the Hebrew VERB “to be.” See Special Topic: Names For Deity at Ps. 1:1.

▣ **“who”** Verse 1 is a question which may be a textual marker for a type of liturgy used for those who enter the temple on a feast day.

▣ **“Your tent. . . Your holy hill”** These are parallel which means the VERBS (“abide” and “dwell”) are also. The concept of being in YHWH’s temple permanently (cf. Ps. 23:6b) is eternal fellowship with God that

1. reaches beyond this life
2. involves intimacy
3. has a daily aspect

Psalm 27:4-6 expresses this same thought in a non-hyperbolic way (i.e., “all the days of my life,” cf. Ps. 23:6a).

Also note that in Ps. 5:4b “no evil abides/resides with YHWH,” but the faithful follower desires to live with God (cf. Ps. 61:4; 84:10).

15:2-5 These verses describe (in balanced positive and negative attributes) the kind of person who will dwell with God (cf. Ps. 24:3-6).

1. walks in integrity (“blameless,” BDB 1071, cf. Ps. 18:23,31; 119:80; Pro. 28:18)
2. works righteousness
3. speaks truth (see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1) in his heart
4. does not slander
5. does not do evil to his neighbor
6. does not take up a reproach against his friend
7. despises reprobates
8. honors those who fear the LORD (i.e., covenant partners)
9. swears to truth (i.e., a vow, cf. Leviticus 27)
10. does not change (renege on a vow for self interest)
11. does not charge interest (cf. Exod. 22:25; Lev. 25:36)
12. does not take a bribe against the innocent (cf. Exod. 23:8; Deut. 16:19)

Notice that all of these characterizations describe how a godly person lives and treats others. To know God is to respect people. Faithful followers are meant to live and love so that the world may come to know and emulate the Creator God.

15:4b “those who fear the LORD” This is a recurrent description of faithful followers (cf. Ps. 25:12,14; 103:11,13; 118:4). They are described in several ways.

1. what they do
 - a. praise, glorify, and stand in awe of YHWH, Ps. 22:23
 - b. walk in His way, Ps. 128:1

2. what He does for them
 - a. explains His covenant, Ps. 25:14
 - b. brings salvation near, Ps. 85:9
 - c. is their help and shield, Ps. 115:11
 - d. blesses them, Ps. 115:13; 128:1
 - e. fulfills their desires, Ps. 145:19 (also “hears their cry and will save them”)

15:5c This is the summary statement. Those who live in covenant with God and their brothers/sisters will never be shaken (BDB 556, KB 555, *Niphal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 17:5; 30:6; Pro. 10:30; 12:3). TEV translates it as “will always be secure.” Isaiah 33:15 seems to parallel the glorification of those who can approach and dwell with YHWH. If so, then Isa. 33:16 is parallel to Ps. 15:5c.

The purpose of salvation is not just individual-focused but societal! A love for God should issue in love for each other! We must not separate justification from justice! The Fall of Genesis 3 affected all mankind (cf. Ps. 14:1-3). The image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in mankind was damaged. Mankind has turned inward. Selfishness and independence now characterize his/her thoughts and actions. A new encounter with God changes this focus (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-27). The new person again has a sense of dependance. He/she lives for God/for others.

▣ **“never”** See Special Topic: Forever at Ps. 9:5.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe the person who can approach YHWH in the temple.
2. How is “lifestyle faith” related to saving faith?
3. List the five positive and negative characteristics of a faithful follower.
4. Define “usury.”
5. Does this Psalm imply a righteous person will never suffer?

PSALM 16

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD the Psalmist's Portion in Life and Deliverer in Death <u>MT Intro</u> "Mikhtam of David"	The Hope of the Faithful, and the Messiah's Victory	An Act of Personal Faith in God's Power to Save (A Song of Trust)	A Prayer of Confidence	Yahweh My Heritage
16:1-4	16:1 16:2-3 16:4	16:1-2 16:3-4	16:1-3 16:4	16:1 16:2-3a 16:3b-6
16:5-6	16:5-6	16:5-6	16:5-6	
16:7-11	16:7-8 16:9-11	16:7-8 16:9-10 16:11	16:7-8 16:9-10 16:11	16:7-8 16:9-11

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:1-4

¹Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You.

²I said to the LORD, "You are my LORD;

I have no good besides You."

³As for the saints who are in the earth,
 They are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight.
⁴The sorrows of those who have bartered for another *god* will be multiplied;
 I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood,
 Nor will I take their names upon my lips.

16:1 “Preserve me, O God” This is the only IMPERATIVE (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) in Psalm 16. It is an urgent prayer request. From Ps. 16:10-11 it becomes obvious that the psalmist is facing death. He requests life but knows that even death will not separate him from God (cf. Rom. 8:31-38).

In this Psalm Deity is called by

1. *El*, v. 1 (general title of God in the ANE)
2. *YHWH*, vv. 2,5,7,8
3. *Adon*, v. 2

See Special Topic: Names For Deity at Ps. 1:1.

▣ **“for I take refuge in You”** This is the theme of many Psalms! For “refuge” see notes at Ps. 5:11.

Humans are made in the image and likeness of God Himself (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). We were created for fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:8). We can find peace, rest, joy, purpose, and safety only in Him!

16:2 This is the psalmist’s profession of faith. Verse 2 seems to summarize a previous prayer or confession.



NASB	“I have no good beside You”
NKJV	“My goodness is nothing apart from You”
NRSV	“I have no good apart from You”
TEV	“all the good things I have come from You”
REB	“from You alone comes the good I enjoy”
NET Bible	“my only source of well-being”
JPSOA footnote	“I have no good but in You”

One is tempted to read into this phrase the NT doctrine of justification, but in the OT a better parallel is Ps. 73:25-28. *YHWH* is the psalmist’s only “good.” The idols of the nations are false (cf. vv. 3-4). The gracious, merciful, covenant God honors those who trust Him and live according to His covenant requirements (i.e., OT – Mosaic covenant; NT – the gospel, cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-27). The result is a life and an afterlife of fellowship with God.

16:3-4 There are many questions about how to understand this verse. The Jewish Study Bible says of them (p. 1297) that “These are among the most obscure verses in the Psalter.”

1. Who are “the saints” (BDB 872) – Some (NEB, NJB) scholars take the last words of Ps. 16:2 and bring the negative into v. 3, which makes “saints” refer to “the sacred spirits of the earth” (i.e., the idols of Ps. 16:4). See note below.
2. Who are “the majestic ones” (BDB 12) – Because of parallelism they are either positive (i.e., godly ones, cf. TEV) or negative (i.e., Canaanite idols, NJB).

It is possible to take these two titles as referring to the covenant people in v. 3 who become idolaters in v. 4. Many translations separate verses 3 and 4 into separate strophes. The question is, “Do vv. 3-4 form a contrast or an extended description?”

16:3 “saints” This is the Hebrew term *Kadosh* (BDB 872), which is used for

1. the faithful followers of YHWH – Deut. 33:3; Ps. 34:9; Dan. 8:24
2. spiritual beings (i.e., angels) – Job 5:1; 15:15; Ps. 89:5,7; Dan. 8:13 (twice); Zech. 14:5

SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS (HOLY) (קדוש)

I. The Old Testament

- A. The etymology of the term *kadosh* (BDB 872) is uncertain, possibly Canaanite. It is possible that part of the root (i.e., *kd*) means “to divide.” This is the source of the popular definition “separated (from Canaanite culture, cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19) for God’s use.”
- B. It relates to God’s presence in things, places, times, and persons. It is not used in Genesis, but becomes common in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.
- C. In the Prophetic literature (esp. Isaiah and Hosea) the personal element previously present, but not emphasized comes to the fore. It becomes a way of designating the essence of God (cf. Isa. 6:3). God is holy. His name representing His character is Holy. His people who are to reveal His character to a needy world are holy (if they obey the covenant in faith).
- D. God’s mercy and love are inseparable from the theological concepts of covenants, justice, and essential character. Herein is the tension in God toward an unholy, fallen, rebellious humanity. There is a very interesting article on the relationship between God as “merciful” and God as “holy” in Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 112-113.

II. The New Testament

- A. The writers of the NT (except Luke) are Hebrew thinkers, but are influenced by Koine Greek (i.e., the Septuagint). It is the Greek translation of the OT, not Classical Greek literature, thought, or religion that controls their vocabulary.
- B. Jesus is holy because He is of God and like God (cf. Luke 1:35; 4:34; Acts 3:14; 4:27,30). He is the Holy and Righteous One (cf. Acts 3:14; 22:14). Jesus is holy because He is sinless (cf. John 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:22; 1 John 3:5).
- C. Because God is holy, His children are to be holy (cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26; Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:16). Because Jesus is holy, His followers are to be holy (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Galatians 4:19; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:3; 1 Peter 1:15). Christians are saved to serve in Christlikeness (holiness).

16:4

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

“sorrows”

TEV

“troubles”

NJB

“teeming idols”

LXX

“infirmities”

REB

“endless trouble”

The word “troubles” (עֲצָבוֹת, BDB 781) is very similar to “idols” (עֲצָבִים, BDB 781, NJB). The context is obviously about idolatry. Exactly who is referred to in v. 3 is uncertain.

It is possible to see the term “another” (אֲחֵר, BDB 29 I, v. 4) as “other gods” (אֱלֹהִים, cf. Isa. 42:8; NET Bible, p. 866, #29).

For an extensive discussion see NIDOTTE, vol. 2, pp. 860-862 or UBS Handbook, pp. 141-142.

- The psalmist who takes refuge in YHWH refuses to
1. pour out a drink offering of blood (of animal sacrifices or a metaphor for wine)
 2. take their names on his lips (cf. Exod. 20:3-5)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:5-6

**⁵The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup;
You support my lot.**

**⁶The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places;
Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.**

16:5-6 Possibly the drink offering mentioned in verse 4 reminded the psalmist of the idiom of “cup,” which denoted one’s destiny (cf. Ps. 11:6; 23:5; 75:8; 116:13). Usually it has a negative connotation but not here.

The “lot” alludes to the dividing of the land of Canaan into tribal allocations by Joshua, by lot (cf. Joshua 13-19), which is the prophetic fulfillment of YHWH’s promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1-3). The Levites and Priests inherited only 48 cities (cf. Joshua 20-24). They were said to have the Lord Himself as their inheritance (cf. Num. 18:20; Deut. 18:1). However, in Psalm this designation is expanded to all faithful followers (cf. Ps. 73:26; 119:57; 142:5; also Lam. 3:24).

Verse 6 continues this imagery by “lines have fallen to me.” The psalmist asserts that his inheritance is beautiful (i.e., Jer. 3:19).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:7-11

**⁷I will bless the LORD who has counseled me;
Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.**

**⁸I have set the LORD continually before me;
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.**

**⁹Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will dwell securely.**

**¹⁰For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.**

**¹¹You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.**

16:7-11 The psalmist asserts his faith in YHWH’s

1. counsel, v. 7a (cf. Ps. 32:8)
2. instructions, v. 7b
3. powerful presence, vv. 8,11
4. victory, v. 8b

The result is that he rejoices in his security in YHWH (cf. v. 9), even in death (vv. 10-11).

1. He will not abandon the psalmist in *Sheol*, v. 10 (cf. Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27)
2. He will make known to him the path of life (cf. Ps. 139:24; Pro. 15:24; i.e., an idiom for daily faithful living; for a similar phrase see Ps. 101:2,6)
3. He will be with him personally, even in *Sheol* (cf. Ps. 139:7-8)
4. He provides in abundance all the psalmist needs

Even in times of distress the faithful follower can know that YHWH is with him/her, for him/her, and will never leave him/her! This faith in YHWH’s faithfulness is our hope, joy, peace, rest, and victory!

16:8b “at my right hand” YHWH’s right hand (see Special Topic: God Described as Human [anthropomorphism] at Ps. 2:4-6). The right hand is proverbial for power and strength. The Messiah is described as seated on God’s right hand which denotes the place of power, preeminence, and authority.

The combination of several elements in this Psalm made it Messianic for the Apostles, Peter and Paul

1. right hand imagery, vv. 8,11
2. life beyond the physical existence
3. title “Holy One”

See fuller note at verse 10.

16:9

NASB, NKJV	“my glory”
NRSV, NJB	“my soul”
LXX	“my tongue”
JPSOA	“my whole being”
REB	“my spirit”

The Hebrew word “glory” (כְּבוֹד, BDB 458 II) may be a scribal error for “liver” (כִּדְבֵךְ, BDB 458, cf. Gen. 49:6; Ps. 30:12), which, like the heart, denoted the whole person (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, pp. 587-588; NET Bible, p. 866, #11). Notice that “heart,” “liver/glory,” and “flesh” all are parallel and denote the psalmist himself.

16:10

NASB, NKJV	“Your Holy One”
NRSV, JPSOA	“your faithful one”
NJB, REB	“your faithful servant”
LXX	“your devout”
NET Bible	“your faithful follower”

The Hebrew has “your godly one” (הַסֵּד, BDB 339). This word is used often to describe those covenant people who loved, served, and obeyed YHWH (cf. Ps. 4:3; 12:2; 32:6; 86:2; Micah 7:2). When used of YHWH it is translated “kind” (cf. Ps. 18:25; 145:17) or “gracious” (cf. Jer. 3:12).

Because this verse is quoted by both Peter (cf. Acts 2:27,31) and Paul (cf. Acts 13:35) to refer to Jesus’ resurrection, in this Psalm the term is translated “Holy One” (NASB, NKJV). I am not sure how to view this verse in Psalm 16. In context it obviously refers to a godly, faithful Israelite (note the parallelism of v. 10). It could then have been understood by an Apostle as

1. prophetic
2. typological
3. multiple fulfillment

The Apostles looked back into the OT and saw many signs and foreshadowing, as well as specific predictions, of the life, work, death, resurrection, and coming again of Jesus Christ! I trust their inspiration.



NASB, REB	“the pit”
NKJV, LXX	“corruption”
NRSV, JPSOA	“the Pit”
NJB	“the abyss”

The MT has “Pit” (BDB 1001) and it is parallel to *Sheol* (cf. Job 33:18; Isa. 38:17-18). For *Sheol* see Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Ps. 1:6 and the notes at Ps. 6:5; 9:13. Both were ways of referring to death.

The LXX is quoted by both Peter and Paul in Acts to confirm the resurrection of Jesus. There are several places in the OT which assert, or at least hint at, a resurrection (cf. Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27; Ps. 17:15; 49:15; 56:13; 73:24,25; 86:13; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2). Ezekiel 37 seems to refer to a restoration of the nation, not individual resurrection.

Thank God for the full revelation of the NT.

1. Jesus' empty tomb and post-resurrection appearances
2. Paul's discussion of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15

The afterlife is a progressive revelation!

The life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus changed the Apostles' worldview. Their OT perspective was modified. They began to search the OT for prophecies, typologies, and hints of this new reality. Jesus Himself may have started this by revelatory interpretations about Himself from the OT to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, who passed them on to the group in the upper room (cf. Luke 24:25-27).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Define the word "saints."
2. Are the "saints" the same as "the majestic ones"?
3. How is verse 4 related to idolatry?
4. Define the OT use of the term "portion."
Is it parallel to "lot"?
5. What organ of the human body was believed to be the origin of thought and feelings?
6. Is this a Messianic Psalm because verse 10 is quoted in Acts 13:35?
7. Why is biblical faith described as a "path"?

PSALM 17

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Protection Against Oppressors	Prayer with Confidence in Final Salvation	Prayer of Deliverance from Personal Enemies (A Lament)	The Prayer of An Innocent Person	The Plea of the Innocent
<u>MT Intro</u> "A Prayer of David"				
17:1-5	17:1-2	17:1-2	17:1-2	17:1-2
	17:3-5	17:3-5	17:3-5	17:3-4a 17:4b-7
17:6-12	17:6-9	17:6-7 17:8-12	17:6-7 17:8-9a 17:9b-12	17:8-12
	17:10-12			
17:13-15	17:13-14	17:13-14	17:13-14	17:13-14b 17:14c-15
	17:15	17:15	17:15	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:1-5

¹Hear a just cause, O LORD, give heed to my cry;
Give ear to my prayer, which is not from deceitful lips.
²Let my judgment come forth from Your presence;
Let Your eyes look with equity.
³You have tried my heart;
You have visited *me* by night;
You have tested me and You find nothing;
I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.
⁴As for the deeds of men, by the word of Your lips
I have kept from the paths of the violent.
⁵My steps have held fast to Your paths.
My feet have not slipped.

17:1 Notice the parallel IMPERATIVES referring to the psalmist's prayer.

1. hear – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 17:6; 27:7; 28:2; 30:10; 39:12; 54:12; 61:1; 64:1; 84:8; 102:1; 119:149; 130:2; 143:1
2. give heed – BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 5:2; 55:2; 61:1; 86:6; 142:6
3. give ear – BDB 23, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 5:1; 39:12; 49:1; 54:2; 55:1; 77:1; 80:1; 84:8; 140:6; 141:1; 143:1

Psalms is a book of God's people earnestly asking Him to hear (i.e., take note of and respond to) their sensed needs.

In verse 1 the words of the one with a just cause (BDB 841) is contrasted to the words of the one with "deceitful lips" (cf. Isa. 29:13).

Psalm 17:1 is parallel to 17:6. All three strophes of this Psalm begin with several IMPERATIVES beseeching God to act on the psalmist's behalf!



NASB, NKJV	"not from deceitful lips"
NRSV, NJB	"from lips free of deceit"
TEV	"honest prayer"
JPSOA	"without guile"

The psalmist is asserting his integrity. He prays with no hidden motives or known lies (cf. Isa. 29:13).

17:2 As verse one had three IMPERATIVES, this verse has two understood JUSSIVES.

1. let my judgment/vindication come forth from Your presence – BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. let Your eyes look with equity – BDB 302, KB 301, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense



NASB	"equity"
NKJV	"upright"
NRSV	"the right"
NJB, TEV,	
JPSOA, REB	"right"
LXX	"straightforwardness"

The MT has “evenness,” “uprightness,” or “equity” (BDB 449). Here it refers to YHWH judging fairly or impartially. The psalmist is asking for the God of justice to render a just verdict (cf. v. 1a).

17:3-5 The psalmist enumerates why God should judge/vindicate him.

1. what God has done (all PERFECTS)
 - a. He tried his heart, v. 3a
 - b. He visited him by night, v. 3b (a & b are parallel with no distinction intended)
 - c. He tested him and found nothing, v. 3c (see Special Topic: God Tests His people at 11:4b)
2. what he has done or not done
 - a. he has not transgressed with his mouth, v. 3d
 - b. he has kept away from the path of the violent (the word, BDB 829, means “robber,” cf. Jer. 7:11, but can mean “violent,” cf. Ezek. 18:10), v. 4
 - c. he has walked God’s paths, v. 5a
 - d. he has not slipped, v. 5b (cf. Ps. 18:36)

The concept of “path” means that the psalmist has followed carefully God’s covenant guidelines (cf. Ps. 37:31; 40:2; 44:18; 66:9; 73:2; 119:105; Pro. 14:15). Wicked people

1. deviate from the path to the right or left
2. stumble on the path
3. have slippery steps

See Special Topic: God Tests His People at Ps. 11:4b-5.

17:3d The UBS Text Project (pp. 182-183) has a good brief note about the options for translating this line of poetry.

“If *וְלִי* is interpreted as an infinitive construct with a suffix, the last part of v. 3 should be interpreted as ‘my plans (thoughts) do not go beyond my mouth’ (i.e., my thoughts correspond with my words, my words confirm with my ideas). If *וְלִי* is interpreted as a verb in the first person singular, the clause should be interpreted as ‘if I devise <something> (i.e. something wicked), <this> should not cross my mouth.’”

Also see NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 1112, for the same suggested emendation. The change from the MT, “my wickedness” (BDB 273, KB 273) to “I have considered” or “I planned” (BDB 273, KB 273, *Qal* PERFECT) involves only a change of vowels.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:6-12

- ⁶I have called upon You, for You will answer me, O God;
Incline Your ear to me, hear my speech.**
- ⁷Wondrously show Your lovingkindness,
O Savior of those who take refuge at Your right hand
From those who rise up *against them*.**
- ⁸Keep me as the apple of the eye;
Hide me in the shadow of Your wings**
- ⁹From the wicked who despoil me,
My deadly enemies who surround me.**
- ¹⁰They have closed their unfeeling *heart*,
With their mouth they speak proudly.**
- ¹¹They have now surrounded us in our steps;
They set their eyes to cast *us* down to the ground.**
- ¹²He is like a lion that is eager to tear,
And as a young lion lurking in hiding places.**

17:6-12 This strophe describes God's actions toward the psalmist and his opponents' actions.

1. God's actions
 - a. he called and God answered, v. 6
 - b. God showed His covenant love and loyalty (i.e., lovingkindness, see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7)
 - c. God gave him refuge (see note at Ps. 5:11)
 - d. God kept/protected "the apple of my eye" (an idiom of tender care for someone especially close, cf. Deut. 32:16; Pro. 7:2)
 - e. God hid him in the shadow of His wings (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12)
2. the opponent's actions
 - a. they despoiled him (i.e., kill him), v. 9
 - b. they surrounded him, vv. 9b, 11a
 - c. they closed their heart (lit. "their fat [BDB 316] they have closed" [BDB 688, KB 742, *Qal* perfect], cf. LXX; "fat" is used in a negative sense of people in Ps. 73:3 and 119:70)
 - d. they speak proudly against him
 - e. they set their eyes against him
 - f. they tear him like a lion, v. 12

What a sharp contrast!

17:6

NASB, NKJV "incline Your ear to me"

TEV, NJB,

JPSOA "turn your ear to me"

This is a Hebrew idiom, which when used in prayers, asks YHWH to turn/bend (cf. 2 Kgs. 19:16; Isa. 37:17; Dan. 9:18; Ps. 31:2; 71:2; 86:1; 88:2; 102:2; 116:2).

YHWH, though a non-corporal spiritual being, is described in human vocabulary. See the Special Topic on anthropomorphism at Ps. 2:4-6. Humans have no vocabulary but that related to this planet and their physicalness. Human vocabulary used of God or the spiritual realm is always figurative.

17:7 This verse has a series of powerful, emotive theological terms related to YHWH's person and mercy.

1. wondrously show – BDB 811, KB 930, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (see related word BDB 810 in Ps. 33:22, see Special Topic at Ps. 9:1)
2. lovingkindness, YHWH's *hesed* – BDB 338 (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7) which denotes His covenant loyalty and steadfast love
3. O Savior – BDB 446, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE, i.e., the one who saves, cf. Ps. 106:7,21
4. refuge – BDB 340, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, YHWH is a strong and mighty fortress for those who take refuge in Him, cf. Ps. 5:11; 18:2

▣ **"at Your right hand"** This phrase can be understood in several senses.

1. the place close to YHWH where the needy seek refuge, cf. NASB, TEV
2. the means by which YHWH delivers the needy (i.e., His strong right hand, cf. NKJV, JPSOA, REB, see Special Topic: Hand at Ps. 7:3-4)
3. the close association between the psalmist and his enemies (i.e., close associates, cf. NRSV)

17:9 "the wicked" It is hard to identify this group. It could refer to

1. covenant partners who, for their own purposes, attack the psalmist
2. covenant partners who knowingly violate YHWH's covenant
3. the surrounding nations who ignorantly, blindly follow idols and not YHWH

Only the context of the Psalm and the individual strophe can help the identification. I am not sure “the wicked” realize they are such. Often they think they are serving God in their actions.

In this Psalm they seem to be wealthy, successful Israelites who see their possessions and children as a covenant sign of God’s approval.

17:11 “They have now surrounded us” The MT has the VERB (BDB 685, KB 738) as SINGULAR but it is paralleled in the next line with a PLURAL VERB. So the Masoretic scholars put a marginal note (*Qere*) suggesting it be read as a PLURAL (cf. NASB “us” in v. 11, lines a and b).

I think the SINGULAR (MT) is best. This Psalm is an individual lament, but later came to be used liturgically for the whole community, which is so common in the Psalms.



NASB, NKJV	“our steps”
NRSV	“they track me down”
NJB	“they are advancing”

The Hebrew of v. 11 starts with “our steps” (BDB 81, FEMININE PLURAL, אֲשׁוּנַיִר) but by a change of vowels, can become a VERB, “advance” (BDB 80, אָשַׁר), which is in one Hebrew manuscript, cf. NRSV, NJB.



NASB	“to cast <i>us</i> to the ground”
NKJV	“crouching down to the earth”
NRSV	“to cast me to the ground”
TEV	“to pull me down”
NJB	“hurl me to the ground”
LXX	“to incline at the ground”
Peshitta	“to bury me in the ground”

The VERBAL “to cast” (*Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is literally the VERB “incline” (BDB 639, KB 692) used in v. 6, but here that translation does not fit the context. Remember words have meaning only in context! Poetry forces words to be used in unique ways.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:13-15

¹³**Arise, O LORD, confront him, bring him low;
Deliver my soul from the wicked with Your sword,**
¹⁴**From men with Your hand, O LORD,
From men of the world, whose portion is in *this* life,
And whose belly You fill with Your treasure;
They are satisfied with children,
And leave their abundance to their babes.**
¹⁵**As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness;
I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.**

17:13-15 The psalmist calls on God to act on his behalf (v. 13).

1. arise – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. confront – BDB 869, KB 1068, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. bring low – BDB 502, KB 499, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
4. deliver – BDB 812, KB 930, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

Notice the “froms,” which characterize the opponents (vv. 13b-14).

1. from the wicked
2. from men (NET Bible [p. 867, #32] emends it to “from those who kill,” i.e., “murderers” in both lines a and b)
 - a. whose portion in life is of the world
 - b. whose belly is full
 - c. who have many children
 - d. who leave their wealth to their children

However, the psalmist is characterized as

1. one who beholds God’s face in righteousness (idiom of intimacy, cf. Ps. 11:7)
2. one who is satisfied with God’s presence (cf. Ps. 16:11)

Both of the VERBS of Ps. 17:15 are COHORTATIVES.

1. see/behold – BDB 302, KB 301, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. satisfied – BDB 959, KB 1302, *Qal* COHORTATIVE

17:15 As the wicked (and their posterity) are satisfied (BDB 959, KB 1302, *Qal* IMPERFECT) with earthly things, ill-gotten gains; the psalmist (emphatic “I”) is satisfied (BDB 959, KB 1302) with YHWH’s presence!

▣ **“when I awake”** This VERB (BDB 884, KB 1098, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is used in several senses.

1. awake from a special vision of God
2. awake from a night’s sleep
3. awake from drunkenness
4. awake from death

I think #4 best fits the context (i.e., YHWH’s presence, cf. 2 Kgs. 4:31; Job 14:12; Ps. 23:24-25; 139:18; Isa. 26:19; Jer. 51:39,57; Dan. 12:2). If so, then the ending of Psalm 16 and Psalm 17 are similar!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How did YHWH deal with the psalmist’s claim of innocence?
2. How does the psalmist claim that he is innocent?
3. Explain the imagery of “at Your right Hand.”
4. Explain the imagery of “the apple of the eye.”
5. Explain the imagery of “in the shadow of Your wings.”

PSALM 18

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD Praised for Giving Deliverance	God the Sovereign Savior	A King Gives Thanks for a Victory in Battle (A Royal Thanksgiving, cf. 2 Sam. 22:1-3)	David's Song of Victory	A King's Thanksgiving
<u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director. A <i>Psalms</i> of David the servant of the LORD, who spoke to the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said. . . ,				
18:1-3	18:1-3	18:1-3	18:1 18:2-3	18:1 18:2 18:3
18:4-6	18:4-6	18:4-5 18:6	18:4-6	18:4-5 18:6
18:7-15	18:7-12 18:13-15	18:7-15	18:7-15	18:7-8 18:9-10 18:11-12 18:13-14 18:15
18:16-19	18:16-19	18:16-19	18:16-19	18:16-17 19:18-19
18:20-24	18:20-24	18:20-24	18:20-24	18:20-21 18:22-23 18:24-25
18:25-29	18:25-27 18:28-30	18:25-30	18:25-27 18:28-29	18:26-27 18:28-29
18:30-36	18:31-34 18:35-36	18:31-42	18:30-34 18:35-42	18:30 18:31-32 18:33-34 18:35-36
18:37-42	18:37-42			18:37-38 18:39-40 18:41-42

18:43-45	18:43-45	18:43-45	18:43-45	18:43
				18:44-45
18:46-50	18:46-49	18:46-48	18:46-50	18:46-47
				18:48
		18:49-50		18:49
	18:50			18:50

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:1-3

¹**"I love You, O LORD, my strength."**

²**The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.**

³**I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
And I am saved from my enemies.**

18:1-3 The psalmist addresses his God with a series of powerful titles and allusions (same poem in 2 Samuel 22). In the midst of life's stresses he knew the unchanging character of the God of creation and redemption. Notice the personal element in the "my" PRONOUNS.

1. my strength – BDB 305, KB 304, NOUN only here and 1 Sam. 22:2
2. my rock (twice) – two different Hebrew roots
 - a. BDB 700 I – cf. Ps. 31:3; 42:10; 71:3
 - b. BDB 849 – cf. Deut. 32:4,15,30
3. my fortress – BDB 845 II, KB 622, cf. Ps. 31:3; 71:3; 91:2; 144:2

4. my deliverer – BDB 812, KB 930, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, cf. Ps. 40:17; 70:5; 144:2
5. my God (*El*) in whom I take refuge – BDB 340, KB 337, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 2:12; 5:11; 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 25:20; 31:1; 37:40; 57:1; 61:5; 64:10; 71:1; 118:8-9; 141:8; 143:9; 144:2; Pro. 30:5
6. my shield – BDB 171, KB 545 I, cf. Ps. 3:3; 7:10; 18:30,35; 28:7; 33:20; 59:11; 84:11; 115:9-11; 119:114; 144:2; Pro. 2:7; 30:5
7. the horn of my salvation
 - a. “horn” (BDB 901) – an idiom of power or strength, cf. Ps. 75:10
 - b. “horn” may mean “hill,” cf. Isa. 5:1; if so, it is similar imagery to fortress or stronghold (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 991)
8. my stronghold – BDB 960 I, KB 640, cf. Ps. 9:9; 46:7,11; 48:3; 59:9,16,17; 62:2,6; 94:22; 144:2
9. the LORD who is worthy to be praised – BDB 237, KB 248, *Pual* PARTICIPLE, cf. Ps. 48:1; 96:4; 145:3

The accumulative effect of these words of safety, protection, and security is powerful and emotional. Life in a fallen world is hard, unfair, and unpredictable but then there is our God who is exactly the opposite!

18:1 “love” This word (BDB 933, KB 1216, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is the same Hebrew root (רָחַם) as “womb,” but before we read too much into this, the same root also means “vulture”! Be careful of etymology as the only source for meaning. Context determines meaning!

The *Qal* stem of this VERB is found only here and refers to man’s love for God. The *Piel* stem is much more common and is used of God’s compassion for covenant humanity (cf. Exod. 33:19; Deut. 13:13; 30:3; Isa. 14:1; 27:11; 30:18; 49:10,13; 54:8,10; 55:7; 60:10).

This VERB is not paralleled in 2 Samuel 22 and BDB thinks it may have been added, possibly when the psalm became liturgical for the community.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:4-6

- ⁴The cords of death encompassed me,
And the torrents of ungodliness terrified me.**
- ⁵The cords of Sheol surrounded me;
The snares of death confronted me.**
- ⁶In my distress I called upon the LORD,
And cried to my God for help;
He heard my voice out of His temple,
And my cry for help before Him came into His ears.**

18:4-5 The psalmist describes his distress in vivid, parallel, poetic language.

1. the cords (i.e., snares, cf. Pro. 13:14; 14:27) of death encompassed me – BDB 67, KB 79, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 116:3; it is possible that “cords,” following 2 Samuel 22, should be understood as “waves,” which forms a good parallel to the next line of poetry. The NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 482, mentions that the DSS (IQH 3:28; 5:39) uses the VERB for thanking God for deliverance from
 - a. “pangs of death”
 - b. “rivers of Belial”
 This also fits the context here.
2. the torrents of Belial (BDB 116, cf. Nah. 1:15; 2 Cor. 6:15) terrified me – BDB 129, KB 147, *Piel* IMPERFECT; the VERB is used often in Job (cf. Job 3:5; 9:34; 13:11,21; 15:24; 18:11; 33:7). In 2 Sam. 22:5 “Belial” is translated “destruction,” which shows it can be non-personal
3. the cords of *Sheol* (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6) surround me – BDB 685, KB 738, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 17:11; 22:12,16; 49:5; 88:17; 118:10-12

4. the snares of death confronted me – BDB 869, KB 1068, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 18:18; Job 30:27
As “my” was prominent in Ps. 18:1-3, now “me” as the object of attack is prominent in verses 4-5.
Every human is fearful of death until they have a personal faith encounter with the God of life and love (cf. 1 John 4:7-21)! Satan does not control death but he does magnify the fear of death.

18:6 Verse 6 is the psalmist’s response to his sense of impending death (i.e., “distress,” BDB 856 II, cf. Job 15:24; 38:23; Ps. 66:14; 119:143).

1. I called upon the LORD – BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERFECT

2. I cried to my God – BDB 1002, KB 1443, *Piel* IMPERFECT

His prayers are answered.

1. He heard my voice out of His temple

2. He heard my cry for help before it came into His ears (cf. Ps. 6:8-9; 28:2,6)

Notice the parallelism of lines 1 and 2 then lines 3 and 4. This synonymous parallelism is characteristic of Hebrew poetry (see Introductory Article). The God of protection is also the God who responds to prayer!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:7-15

⁷Then the earth shook and quaked;

And the foundations of the mountains were trembling

And were shaken, because He was angry.

⁸Smoke went up out of His nostrils,

And fire from His mouth devoured;

Coals were kindled by it.

⁹He bowed the heavens also, and came down

With thick darkness under His feet.

¹⁰He rode upon a cherub and flew;

And He sped upon the wings of the wind.

¹¹He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him,

Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.

¹²From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds,

Hailstones and coals of fire.

¹³The LORD also thundered in the heavens,

And the Most High uttered His voice,

Hailstones and coals of fire.

¹⁴He sent out His arrows, and scattered them,

And lightning flashes in abundance, and routed them.

¹⁵Then the channels of water appeared,

And the foundations of the world were laid bare

At Your rebuke, O LORD,

At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.

18:7-15 This strophe describes God’s response to the psalmist’s prayer. God arouses Himself for action (i.e., [1] holy war imagery or [2] rises from His throne)!

1. in verse 7 the distress of the faithful follower causes Divine anger (BDB 354, KB 351, *Qal* PERFECT, see Special Topic at Ps. 2:4-6). This burning anger (earthquake imagery, cf. Isa. 29:6)

is characterized in verse 8 (i.e., thunderstorm imagery, cf. Deut. 33:26; Isa. 29:6). It is possible this imagery reflects Exod. 19:18-19 (i.e., giving of the Mosaic covenant at Mt. Sinai).

2. YHWH's response is characterized in the imagery of a thunderstorm in verses 9-15.
 - a. bowed the heavens (cf. Isa. 64:1). The REB revocalizes the phrase and has, "He parted the heavens." This same imagery is reflected in Isa. 34:4; Rev. 6:12-14.
 - b. came down with thick darkness
 - c. darkness of waters
 - d. thick clouds of the skies
 - e. brightness before Him
 - f. hailstones and coals of fire
 - g. thundered in the heavens
 - h. lightning flashes
 - i. channels of water

In many ways this description alludes to the *Shekinah* cloud of glory during the wilderness wandering period, both hiding and revealing YHWH (cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 19:19-20,24; 16:10; 19:9,16; 24:15-18; 40:34-38).

18:7 "the earth shook and quaked" The interpretive question is, "Is this literal or figurative?"

1. literal – their imagery of an earthquake as a sign of God's coming presence, Exod. 19:18; Ps. 68:7-8
2. figurative – a personification of "the earth"
 - a. the earth brought forth – Gen. 1:12,24
 - b. the earth swallowed them – Exod. 15:12; Num. 16:34
 - c. the earth spewed out – Lev. 18:25,28; 20:22
 - d. the earth opened its mouth – Num. 16:32; 26:10; Deut. 11:6; Ps. 106:17
 - e. the earth as a witness – Deut. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; 32:1
 - f. speak to the earth – Job 12:8; 16:18; Ps. 50:4
 - g. the earth will rise up against him – Job 20:27
 - h. the earth cries out – Job 31:38
 - i. the earth praises YHWH – Ps. 69:34
 - j. the earth rejoices – Ps. 96:11; 97:1
 - k. the earth trembled – Jdgs. 5:4; 1 Sam. 14:15; Isa. 13:13
 - l. the earth mourns – Isa. 24:4; 33:9; Hos. 4:3

18:8 "fire" See Special Topic at Ps. 11:6.

18:9 "He. . .came down" YHWH lives in heaven. His presence dwells between the *cherubim* on the ark of the covenant, but from time to time the Bible speaks of His coming to humans in special ways (i.e., theophanies, cf. Exodus 3). Exodus 3:7-8 is a specific example of YHWH responding to His people's need and acting on their behalf. In this context the imagery is described as a violent thunderstorm.

18:10-11 This describes YHWH in imagery of a thunderstorm. Rain was important for semi-desert dwellers but storms were frightening. In Israel's history after they entered Canaan the Israelites became influenced by the fertility gods, especially *Ba'al*, the storm god, the giver of rain and fertility. However, the true "storm god" was YHWH (note the imagery of Exodus 19).

18:10 "cherub" Note parallel imagery in Ps. 104:3. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: *CHERUBIM*

- A. One of several types of angelic beings. This particular type guarded sacred areas (cf. Exod. 25:18-22; 1 Kgs. 8:6-7).
- B. Etymology is uncertain.
 - 1. from Akkadian “intercessor” or “mediator” between God and man
 - 4. from Hebrew this is a possible word play between, “chariot” and “cherub” (cf. Ezekiel 1; 10)
 - 3. some say it means “brilliant appearance”
- C. Physical form – This has been difficult to ascertain because of varying descriptions within the Bible and varying animal-human forms found in the Ancient Near East. Some link them to
 - 1. Winged bull of Mesopotamia
 - 2. Winged eagle – lions of Egypt called “griffins”
 - 3. Winged creatures on Hiram, King of Tyres’ throne
 - 4. Sphinx of Egypt and similar forms found in King Ahab’s ivory palace in Samaria
- D. Physical Description
 - 1. The form *Cherubim* is linked with the *Seraphim* of Isaiah 6.
 - 2. Examples of different forms
 - a. Number of faces
 - (1) two – Ezek. 41:18
 - (2) four – Ezek. 1:6,10; 10:14,16,21,22
 - (3) one – Rev. 4:7
 - b. Number of wings
 - (1) two – 1 Kgs. 6:24
 - (2) four – Ezek. 1:6,11; 2:23; 10:7,8-21
 - (3) six (like *Seraphim* of Isa. 6:2) – Rev. 4:8
 - 3. Other features
 - a. Human hands – Ezek. 1:8; 10:8,21
 - b. Legs
 - (1) Straight, no knee – Ezek. 1:7
 - (2) Calf feet – Ezek. 1:7
 - 4. Flavius Josephus admits that no one knew what *cherubim* looked like (cf. *Antiquities of the Jews*, VIII.3.3).
- E. Places and purpose found in the Bible
 - 1. Guardian of the tree of life, Gen. 3:24 (possibly used metaphorically of Satan in Ezek. 28:14,16)
 - 2. Guardian of the Tabernacle
 - a. Over the ark of the covenant; Exod. 25:18-20; Num. 7:89; 1 Sam. 4:4
 - b. Depicted on veil and curtains; Exod. 26:1,31; 36:8,35
 - 3. Guardian of Solomon’s Temple
 - a. Two large carved cherubs in Holy of Holies; 1 Kings 6:23-28; 8:6-7; 2 Chr. 3:10-14; 5:7-9
 - b. On walls of inner shrine; 1 Kgs. 6:29,35; 2 Chr. 3:7

- c. On panels that were associated with the several lavers; 1 Kgs. 7:27-39
- 4. Guardian of Ezekiel's Temple
 - a. Carved on walls and doors; Ezek. 41:18-20, 25
- 5. Connected with transportation of deity
 - a. possibly a metaphor for wind; 2 Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10; 104:3-4; Isa. 19:1
 - b. guardian of God's throne; Ps. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16
 - c. guardian of God's portable throne chariot; Ezek. 1:4-28; 10:3-22; 1 Chr. 28:18
- 6. Herod's Temple
 - a. Painted on walls (i.e., guardian, cf. Talmud "Yoma" 54a)
- 7. Revelation throne scene (i.e., guardian, cf. Rev. 4-5)

18:11 "He made darkness His hiding place" In the OT to see YHWH meant death (cf. Gen. 16:13; 32:30; Exod. 3:6; 33:20; Jdgs. 6:22-23; 13:22; 1 Kgs. 19:13; Isa. 6:5; Acts 7:32). The thick dark cloud was a way of protecting the Israelites (cf. Exod. 19:9; 20:21; Deut. 4:11; 5:23).

18:15 "the foundations of the world" This imagery is expressed as

- 1. the pillars of the earth – 1 Sam. 2:8; Job 9:6; 38:4-6; Ps. 75:3; 104:5
- 2. the roots of the mountains – Deut. 32:22; Job 28:9; Jonah 2:6

It is possible that verse 15 is alluding to YHWH's great act of deliverance in

- a. prose – Exod. 14:21-22, 29
- b. poetry – Exod. 15:8; Ps. 106:9

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:16-19

- ¹⁶He sent from on high, He took me;
 He drew me out of many waters.
- ¹⁷He delivered me from my strong enemy,
 And from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.
- ¹⁸They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
 But the LORD was my stay.
- ¹⁹He brought me forth also into a broad place;
 He rescued me, because He delighted in me.

18:16-19 This strophe describes YHWH's deliverance of the psalmist. Also note the "distress" of verse 6 is now clarified as "those who hate me, for they were too mighty for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity" (cf. Ps. 59:16-17)!

- 1. He sent from on high, He took me, cf. Ps. 144:7
- 2. He drew me out of many waters, cf. Ps. 32:6
- 3. He delivered me from my strong enemy
- 4. He delivered me from those who hate me
- 5. He brought me forth into a broad place, an idiom for freedom, cf. Ps. 4:1; 31:8; 118:5
- 6. He secured me, because He delighted in me, cf. 2 Sam. 22:20; Ps. 37:23; 41:11; 147:11

18:16 “He drew me out of many waters” This root, מַשַּׁח (BDB 602, KB 642) is found only (1) here [and the parallel in 2 Sam. 22:17] and (2) in the account of Moses’ rescue in Exod. 2:10. It became the popular etymology of the name “Moses.”

The “many waters” can be understood in two ways.

1. a contextual metaphor of trouble/problems/attacks (cf. Ps. 32:6; 46:1-3; 69:1-2; 124:1-5; 144:5-8; Isa. 43:2)
2. an allusion to the Genesis account of YHWH defeating the waters of chaos (cf. Ps. 74:13-14; 89:9-10; 104:6-7; Isa. 51:9-10, see the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 578, and my note at Gen. 1:2, “the deep” at www.freebiblecommentary.org in Genesis 1-11)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:20-24

²⁰The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness;

According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.

²¹For I have kept the ways of the LORD,

And have not wickedly departed from my God.

²²For all His ordinances were before me,

And I did not put away His statutes from me.

²³I was also blameless with Him,

And I kept myself from my iniquity.

²⁴Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,

According to the cleanness of my hands in His eyes.

18:20-24 Notice the *inclusio* of v. 20 compared to v. 24. This strophe should not be understood as the psalmist claiming sinlessness or perfection. Theologically he is asserting his “blamelessness” (see Special Topic below).

Notice the parallelism of each pair.

1. according to my righteousness
2. according to the cleanness of my hands
3. I have kept the ways of the LORD
4. I have not wickedly departed from my God
5. all His ordinances were before me (for #5 and #6 see Special Topic at Ps. 1:2)
6. I did not put away His statutes from me
7. I was blameless with Him
8. I kept myself from my iniquity

SPECIAL TOPIC: BLAMELESS, INNOCENT, GUILTLESS, WITHOUT REPROACH

A. Opening Statements

1. This concept theologically describes mankind’s original state (i.e., Genesis 1, the Garden of Eden).
2. Sin and rebellion have decimated this condition of perfect fellowship (i.e., Genesis 3).
3. Humans (male and female) long for the restoration of fellowship with God because they are made in His image and likeness (i.e., Gen. 1:26-27).
4. God has dealt with sinful mankind in several ways
 - a. godly leaders (i.e., Abraham, Moses, Isaiah)

- b. sacrificial system (i.e., Leviticus 1-7)
 - c. godly examples (i.e., Noah, Job)
- 5. Ultimately God provided the Messiah (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:13-17; Heb. 1:2-3)
 - a. as full revelation of Himself
 - b. as the perfect sacrifice for sin
- 6. Christians are made blameless
 - a. legally through Christ's imputed righteousness (cf. Romans 4-6)
 - b. progressively through the work of the Spirit
 - c. the goal of Christianity is Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:15), which in reality, is the restoration of the image of God lost in the fall of Adam and Eve.
- 7. Heaven is a restoration of the perfect fellowship of the Garden of Eden. Heaven is the New Jerusalem coming down out of God's presence (cf. Rev. 21:2) to a purified earth (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10). The Bible begins and ends on the same themes.
 - a. intimate, personal fellowship with God
 - b. in a garden setting (Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21-22)
 - c. by prophetic statement, the presence and companionship of animals (cf. Isa. 11:6-9)
- B. Old Testament
 - 1. There are so many different Hebrew words that carry the concept of perfection, blamelessness, and innocence that it would be hard to name and show all the intricate relationships.
 - 2. The main terms carrying the concept of perfection, guiltlessness, or innocence (according to Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 94-99) are:
 - a. *shalom* (BDB1022)
 - b. *thamam* (BDB1070)
 - c. *calah* (BDB 478)
 - 3. The Septuagint (i.e., the Bible of the early church) translates many of these concepts into Koine Greek terms used in the NT.
 - 4. The key concept is connected to the sacrificial system.
 - a. *amōmos* (cf. Exod. 29:1; Lev. 1:3,10; 3:1,6; Num. 6:14)
 - b. *amiantos* and *aspilus* also have cultic connotations
- C. New Testament
 - 1. the legal concept
 - a. the Hebrew legal cultic connotation is translated by *amōmos* (cf. Eph. 5:27; Phil. 2:15; 1 Pet. 1:19)
 - b. the Greek legal connotation (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22)
 - 2. Christ is the sinless, blameless, innocent One (*amōmos*, cf. Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19)
 - 3. Christ's followers must emulate Him (*amōmos*, cf. Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; 2 Pet. 3:14; Jude v. 24; Rev. 14:5)
 - 4. This concept is also used of church leaders
 - a. *anegklētos*, "without accusation" (cf. 1 Tim. 3:10; Titus 1:6-7)

- b. *anepileptos*, “above criticism” or “no handle for reproach” (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:7; 6:14; Titus 2:8)
- 5. The concept of “undefiled” (*amiantos*) is used of
 - a. Christ Himself (cf. Heb. 7:26)
 - b. the Christian’s inheritance (cf. 1 Pet. 1:4)
- 6. The concept of “wholeness” or “soundness” (*holoklēria*) (cf. Acts 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:23; James 1:4)
- 7. The concept of “without fault,” guiltless innocence is conveyed by *amemptos* (cf. Luke 1:6; Phil. 2:15; 3:6; 1 Thess. 2:10; 3:13; 5:23)
- 8. The concept of “not subject to blame” is conveyed by *amōmētos* (cf. 2 Pet. 3:14)
- 9. The concept of “spotless,” “unblemished” is often used in passages that have one of the above terms also (cf. 1 Tim. 6:14; James 1:27; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2 Pet. 3:14)
- D. The number of words in Hebrew and Greek which convey this concept shows its importance. God has provided for our need, through Christ, and now calls on us to be like Him.

Believers are positionally, forensically, declared “right,” “just,” and “blameless” by the work of Christ. Now believers are to possess their position. “Walk in the light as He is in the light” (cf. 1 John 1:7). “Walk worthy of the calling” (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). Jesus has restored the image of God. Intimate fellowship is now possible, but remember God wants a people who reflect His character, as His Son did. We are called to nothing less than holiness (cf. Matt. 5:20,48; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:13-16). God’s holiness, not only legally (justification), but existentially (daily Christlikeness)!

18:20 “He has recompensed me” This VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427) is repeated at the close of the strophe (cf. v. 24). There are consequences for unbelief, but, thank God, there are benefits for a faithful follower! These are spelled out in the next strophe (Ps. 18:25-29).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:25-29

- ²⁵**With the kind You show Yourself kind;**
- With the blameless You show Yourself blameless;**
- ²⁶**With the pure You show Yourself pure,**
- And with the crooked You show Yourself astute.**
- ²⁷**For You save an afflicted people,**
- But haughty eyes You abase.**
- ²⁸**For You light my lamp;**
- The LORD my God illumines my darkness.**
- ²⁹**For by You I can run upon a troop;**
- And by my God I can leap over a wall.**

18:25-29 These are the wonderful, divine consequences which follow a faithful believer.

- 1. “With the kind (BDB 339), You show Yourself kind” (BDB 338, KB 336, *Hithpaal* IMPERFECT; this verse and the parallel in 2 Sam. 22:26 are the only places in the OT that the VERB form of this special covenant NOUN, *hesed*, occurs; see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7). Notice that “with” (עִם) introduces vv. 25-26, while “for” (כִּי) introduces vv. 27-29.

2. “With the blameless (BDB 1071, cf. v. 23) You show Yourself blameless” (BDB 1070, KB 1752, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT).
3. “With the pure (BDB 140, KB 162, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Isa. 52:11) You show Yourself pure” (BDB 140, KB 162, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT). Notice the antithetical parallelism of vv. 26 and 27.
4. “With the crooked (BDB 786 I) You show Yourself twisted (BDB 836, KB 990, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT). “Crooked” is the opposite of righteous, which denoted that which was straight, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5.
5. “For You save (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) an afflicted people.” Poor or afflicted people are contrasted with wicked people.
6. “But haughty eyes (BDB 926, KB 1202, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Isa. 2:11; 5:15) You abase” (BDB 1050, KB 1631, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT). Notice the antithetical parallelism of v. 27 (2 Samuel 22 parallel is slightly different).

The strophe affirms the basic biblical truth that one reaps what he/she sows (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

18:28-29 The form of vv. 25-27 is altered in vv. 28-29. The psalmist makes several assertions about YHWH’s actions.

1. For You light (BDB 21, KB 24, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) my lamp (BDB 632, 2 Sam. 22:29 has “You are my Lamp.”
2. YHWH my God illumines (BDB 618, KB 667, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, synonymous parallelism for VERBS) my darkness (objects are antithetical parallelism, i.e., lamp vs. darkness).
3. For by You I can run (i.e., defeat) upon a troop (BDB 151 I, i.e., military unit). Some English translations take נִגַּד (BDB 151) in the sense of “bank” and translate a phrase which parallels “leap over a wall” (cf. REB, NIB). The LXX (i.e., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, 2007) has a totally different phrase, “because in you I shall be rescued from a pirate’s nest.” The 1970 translation of the LXX has the traditional translation. The UBS Text Project gives the word “troop” an “A” rating. The parallel in 2 Samuel 22 also has it.

The AB thinks “troop,” which is found only here, should be “sinew,” נֶגֶד, which would also parallel the next line (p. 114).

4. By my God I can leap over a wall. Numbers 3 and 4 are not synonymous but are two different ways to show the power of God’s empowering.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:30-36

- ³⁰As for God, His way is blameless;
The word of the LORD is tried;
He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.
- ³¹For who is God, but the LORD?
And who is a rock, except our God,
- ³²The God who girds me with strength
And makes my way blameless?
- ³³He makes my feet like hinds’ feet,
And sets me upon my high places.
- ³⁴He trains my hands for battle,
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
- ³⁵You have also given me the shield of Your salvation,

**And Your right hand upholds me;
And Your gentleness makes me great.
³⁶You enlarge my steps under me,
And my feet have not slipped.**

18:30-36 This strophe explains why the psalmist gives YHWH the titles of 18:2. His actions bring the titles!

1. His way is blameless (lit. “complete” or “perfect,” BDB 1071, cf. vv. 23,30,32).
2. His word/promise (BDB 57, used 19 times in Psalm 119) is tried or tested (BDB 864, KB 1057, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLES, cf. 2 Samuel 22:31; Psalm 119:140; Proverbs 30:5). See videos on “The Trustworthiness of God’s Word” on www.freebiblecommentary.org, sermons from Lakeside Baptist Church, Dallas, TX.
3. He is a shield (BDB 171, cf. 18:2)
4. He is a rock (BDB 849, cf. 18:2)
5. He girds (BDB 25, KB 28, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, cf. 18:39) me with strength (BDB 298, synonym of BDB 305 in Ps. 18:2)
6. He makes my way blameless (BDB 1071, cf. 18:23,30,32)
7. He makes my feet secure (BDB 763, KB 840, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) like hinds’ feet (i.e., sure-footed deer who can walk safely in rugged, rocky places, cf. Hab. 3:19)
8. He trains/equips/teaches me for battle, cf. Ps. 144:1
9. He has given me the shield of His salvation, cf. 18:2
10. His right hand upholds me, cf. Ps. 63:8; 119:117 (the right hand is an idiom of powerful action, see Special Topic: Hand at Ps. 7:3-4)
11. His gentleness/humility (KB 855 II, cf. 2 Sam. 22:36; also note Pro. 15:33; 18:12; 22:4) makes me great
12. He enlarges (BDB 931, KB 1210, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) my steps (i.e., parallels 18:19a; Ps. 4:1; 12:5; 31:8; 118:5). NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 317 has a good insight, “What is certain is that whereas spaciousness signifies salvation, narrowness symbolizes trouble and danger.”
13. He enables the psalmist’s feet to not slip (BDB 588, KB 609, *Qal* PERFECT, i.e., stayed on the path, cf. 18:20-24; see note at Ps. 1:1 for path/way)

18:30 “For who is God, but the LORD” This is an allusion to monotheism. See Special Topic at Ps. 2:7.

18:35

NASB, NKJV	“gentleness”
NRSV	“help”
JPSOA	“care”
NASB, JPSOA	
footnotes	“condescension”
REB, NAB	“stoop down”
LXX	“instruction”

The Hebrew root is “condescension” (BDB 776, עָנָה) or “humility” (BDB 776, עֲנִיָּה). BDB supports the second option (NASB), but UBS Text Project gives the first option a “B” rating (some doubt, NRSV).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:37-42

**³⁷I pursued my enemies and overtook them,
And I did not turn back until they were consumed.
³⁸I shattered them, so that they were not able to rise;**

They fell under my feet.

³⁹For You have girded me with strength for battle;

You have subdued under me those who rose up against me.

⁴⁰You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me,

And I destroyed those who hated me.

⁴¹They cried for help, but there was none to save,

Even to the LORD, but He did not answer them.

⁴²Then I beat them fine as the dust before the wind;

I emptied them out as the mire of the streets.

18:37-42 This strophe is the psalmist's description of how, by YHWH's help/empowerment, he defeated his enemies. Again, it is uncertain who these enemies are, but v. 41 implies they were fellow Israelites (i.e., Saul's army, Absalom, or other rebels).

1. I pursued my enemies
2. I overtook them
3. I did not turn back (but the enemies will, cf. v. 40)
4. I shattered them
 - a. they were unable to rise
 - b. they fell under my feet
5. You have girded (i.e., prepared for action) me with strength for battle
6. You have subdued (i.e., caused to bow) them
7. You have made them turn their backs
8. I destroyed those who hated me
9. I beat them fine as the dust
10. I emptied them out as the mire of the streets (cf. 2 Sam. 22:43; Micah 7:10)

Notice some describe David's actions and some YHWH's enabling actions.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:43-45

⁴³You have delivered me from the contentions of the people;

You have placed me as head of the nations;

A people whom I have not known serve me.

⁴⁴As soon as they hear, they obey me;

Foreigners submit to me.

⁴⁵Foreigners fade away,

And come trembling out of their fortresses.

18:43-45 This strophe deals with the King of Israel's exalted place in YHWH's plans for the nations. Israel ("the people" of v. 43a) was meant to inform the nations and draw them to faith in YHWH (see Special Topic at Intro. to Psalm 2). But notice that Israel was "contentious" (cf. Ps. 35:1).

Notice the different phrases that refer to non-Israelites (i.e., Gentiles).

1. the King of Israel (cf. 18:50) was made the head of the nations
2. the nations are a people who the King had not known but now they serve (BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* IMPERFECT) him
3. as soon as these nations hear the King they
 - a. obey (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Niphal* IMPERFECT)

- b. submit (lit. “lying” or “deceive,” but used in the sense of “cringe”; possibly “leanness” or their reduced number and influence. The Hebrew VERB has both senses) – BDB 471, KB 469, *Piel* IMPERFECT
- c. fade away – BDB 615, KB 663, *Qal* IMPERFECT
- d. come trembling – BDB 353, KB 350, *Qal* IMPERFECT; only here in the OT out of their fortresses – (possibly “fatness,” BDB 689, or KB 604, “prison,” cf. Micah 7:17)

Notice all the IMPERFECTS (nine) which denote ongoing action (i.e., continual defeat).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:46-50

⁴⁶**The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock;
And exalted be the God of my salvation,**
⁴⁷**The God who executes vengeance for me,
And subdues peoples under me.**
⁴⁸**He delivers me from my enemies;
Surely You lift me above those who rise up against me;
You rescue me from the violent man.**
⁴⁹**Therefore I will give thanks to You among the nations, O LORD,
And I will sing praises to Your name.**
⁵⁰**He gives great deliverance to His king,
And shows lovingkindness to His anointed,
To David and his descendants forever.**

18:46-50 This strophe is the psalmist’s thanksgiving to YHWH for His character and actions!

Notice the titles and characterizations of YHWH.

1. lives – this is the ADJECTIVE (BDB 311) which comes from the VERB “to be” (BDB 217), which is the meaning of YHWH (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1). He is the ever-living, only-living One! The phrase “as YHWH lives” is usually an introduction to an oath, but here it introduces a doxology.
2. my rock – denotes power and stability (cf. vv. 2,31)
3. the God (אלה) of my salvation
4. His acts on the King’s behalf
 - a. executes vengeance (BDB 668)
 - b. subdues peoples
 - c. delivers (cf. v. 50)
 - d. lifts him above his enemies
 - e. rescues him from the violent man

Notice in light of this what the King of Israel will do.

1. give thanks among the nations
2. sing praises to His Name

The King does this because of

1. YHWH’s deliverance
2. YHWH’s lovingkindness to the King and his descendants forever (cf. 2 Samuel 7)

18:49 This verse (or 2 Sam. 22:50) is used by Paul in Rom. 15:9 to show that YHWH’s plan of redemption from the very beginning included the Gentiles (note Gen. 1:26-27; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6).

Paul also used Deut. 32:43; Ps. 117:1 and Isa. 11:10. There has always been an eternal redemptive plan for all humans (see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan at Intro. to Psalm 2).

18:50 “His anointed” See Special Topic at Psalm 2:2.

▣ **“lovingkindness”** See Special Topic at Psalm 5:7.

▣ **“forever”** See Special Topic at Psalm 9:5.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the titles of God in verse 2.
2. God is described as what in verses 7-15?
3. How would you entitle verses 16-19?
4. Does verse 20 teach a “works righteousness”?
5. Where does the title of “rock” as used of God come from? (vv. 2,31,46 and Deut. 32:4,31)
6. What do verses 43-45 imply?

PSALM 19

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Works and Word of God	The Perfect Revelation of the LORD	Hymn to God as Creator of Nature and Giver of the Law	God's Glory in Creation	Yahweh, Son of Saving Justice
<u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Psalm of David.				
19:1-6	19:1-4b	19:1-4b	19:1-6	19:1-2 19:3-5
	19:4c-6	19:4c-6	The Law of the LORD	19:6
19:7-14	19:7-11	19:7-10	19:7-11	19:7 19:8 19:9 19:11-12
	19:12-13	19:11-13	19:12-13	19:13
	19:14	19:14	19:14	19:14

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is about how humans know God. They cannot discover Him. He must reveal Himself and He has in two ways.
- B. God's revelation must be personally received and implemented! It is not primarily a creed but a personal relationship with God.
- C. This Psalm has been a great blessing to my life in two ways.
 - 1. it shows the trustworthiness and preciousness of Scripture (i.e., vv. 7-10)
 - 2. it gives a hope and peace amidst the daily struggle with sin (i.e., vv. 11-14)The prayer of verse 14 is one I pray often!
- D. Brief Outline
 - 1. General revelation (God reveals Himself in nature, vv. 1-6, cf. Rom. 1:19-20; also note Rom. 2:14-15)
 - 2. Special revelation (God reveals Himself by what He does, cf. parallel of line 2), which is recorded in the Bible, yet supremely in His Son, vv. 7-11, cf. John 1:1-14; 14:6,9; 2 Cor. 5:17-21 (see Biblical Interpretation Seminar online at www.freebiblecommentary.org, which includes information about general hermeneutical procedures and special procedures for different genres)
 - 3. Prayer of surrender, vv. 12-14

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:1-6

¹The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
²Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.
³There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.
⁴Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their utterances to the end of the world.
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,
⁵Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.
⁶Its rising is from one end of the heavens,
And its circuit to the other end of them;
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

19:1 “The heavens are telling of the glory of God” This is known as “natural revelation.” Romans 1:19-20 expresses the same truth that everyone can know something about God from the physical creation. Also notice Rom. 2:14-15 which asserts an inner moral witness in humans.

▣ **“heavens”** Note Ps. 8:1; 50:6 and how they relate to the theology of Rom. 1:19-20. See Special Topic at Psalm 2:4.

▣ “glory” See BDB 458, #2, C, (2).

SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (*DOXA*)

The biblical concept of “glory” is difficult to define. Believers’ glory is that they understand the gospel and glory in God, not in themselves (cf. 1:29-31; Jer. 9:23-24).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (כבוד, BDB 468) was originally a commercial term relating to a pair of scales (“to be heavy”). That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God’s majesty (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod. 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). YHWH can only be truly known through Christ (cf. John 12:45; 14:8-11; Col.1:15; Heb. 1:3). The term “glory” is somewhat ambiguous.

1. it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”
2. it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God
3. it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-21). It is first used of YHWH’s presence with His people during the wilderness wandering period in Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; and Num. 14:10.



NASB	“expanse”
NKJV, NRSV,	
LXX	“firmament”
NRSV footnote	“dome”
NJB, REB	“the vault of heaven”
JPSOA	“sky”

The term (BDB 956) is used in Gen. 1:6,7 (thrice),8,14,15,17. It denotes the Hebrew concept of the atmosphere as a solid dome or stretched skin (i.e., tent, cf. Ps. 104:2; Isa. 40:22). The windows of heaven must be opened to allow the rain to fall.

Notice that “heavens” in line 1 is parallel to “expanse” in line 2.

▣ **“the work of His hands”** This phrase is asserting the personal involvement of YHWH in creation (cf. Isa. 48:13; 64:8). It specifically reflects His personal creation of Adam in Gen. 2:7 (i.e., “formed,” not spoken into existence).

19:2-3 “day to day” Notice the personification of both the “day” and “night.” The point is that creation continuously, though silently (cf. v. 3), is giving the revelation/message about God (i.e., a good modern proponent of this concept is the “Intelligent Design” movement).

19:2 “pour forth” This VERB (BDB 615, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) has the basic meaning of a “bubbling spring” (cf. Pro. 18:4). It came to be used metaphorically of speaking

1. positively – Ps. 19:2; 119:171; 145:7; Pro. 1:23
2. negatively – Ps. 59:7; 94:4; Pro. 15:28

▣ **“night to night reveals knowledge”** Mankind has always looked in awe and sometimes idolatry at the starry heavens (cf. 2 Kgs. 23:5; Ps. 8:1,3).

19:3 “There is no speech” This refers to nature’s silent, but powerful, witness.

19:4

NASB, NKJV	“line”
NRSV, JPSOA	“voice”
TEV, NJB,	
REB	“message”
LXX NASB margin	“sound”
NEB	“music”
Peshitta	“words”

The MT has קקם (BDB 876 II, KB 1081 from קו), which denotes a “boundary line,” “musical melody” (cf. NEB). The UBS Text Project gives it an “A” rating. However, the LXX and Jerome have ולםק (BDB 876, KB 1083 from קול) which means “speech,” “word,” “cry,” which seems to fit the context best (same root in v. 3, i.e., ‘voice’). The early church used (i.e., quoted from) the LXX.

▣ **“through all the earth. . .to the ends of the world”** These first two lines of v. 4 are synonymous parallelism. The theological thrust is the universal availability of God’s revelation to humans (cf. Isa. 42:10; 49:6; 62:11). All are responsible for their knowledge of God (Rom. 1:18-3:18).

Natural revelation (i.e., through the physical creation and an inner moral witness) results in a spiritual responsibility on the part of all humans (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:18). Once a person is saved it then becomes a way of wonder, praise, and worship of the God of creation (cf. Psalm 8).

19:4c-6 “the sun” This imagery using the sun is not a scientific description or mythological account but typical OT language using popular descriptive idioms for a natural phenomenon. Notice the imagery.

1. the sun has a tent (i.e., abode), v. 4c
2. the sun is a bridegroom, v. 5a
3. the sun runs a set course, v. 5b (i.e., described in v. 6)

As the sun lights all the earth, so too, the revelation of God’s character, power, beauty, and design is universal (cf. v. 4a,b). Every human knows something about God. The only other place that “natural revelation” is used theologically to denote human responsibility is Rom. 1:18-3:18.

Paul also specifically used this verse in Rom. 10:18 in a context that denotes the need of the world hearing/receiving the message of God in Christ (i.e., the gospel). The rabbis of Paul’s day often put several quotes together to make a point. Paul was trained in the procedure.

The psalmist possibly picked the sun as a servant of YHWH to critique the sun worship of the ANE. This Psalm, like Genesis 1, shows YHWH as creator and controller of the heavenly bodies (i.e., sun, moon, stars, planets, comets, etc.). They are not gods or angels that control, or even affect, the lives of humans!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:7-14

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;

The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

⁸The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;

The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

⁹The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;

The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

¹⁰They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

¹¹Moreover, by them Your servant is warned;

In keeping them there is great reward.

¹²**Who can discern *his* errors? Acquit me of hidden *faults*.**

¹³**Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous *sins*;**

Let them not rule over me;

Then I will be blameless,

And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.

¹⁴**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart**

Be acceptable in Your sight,

O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

19:7 “the LORD” This is the covenant name for God, YHWH. It is from the Hebrew VERB “to be,” cf. Exod. 3:14. The rabbis say it refers to God in His special covenant relationship to Israel. See Special Topic at Ps. 1:1.

▣ **“perfect”** See Special Topic: Blameless at Ps. 18:20-24.

19:7-9 “law. . .testimony. . .precepts. . .commandment. . .fear. . .judgments” These are synonyms for God’s written revelation. See Special Topic at Ps. 1:2.

▣ **“perfect. . .sure. . .right. . .pure. . .clean. . .true”** These are characteristics of God’s written revelation. The Bible is the only clear, self-revelation of God. This is a crucial faith assertion. It is normally called “inspiration” (see Special Topic below). If you are interested in my evidence for this faith presupposition see “The Trustworthiness of the NT” online at www.freebiblecommentary.org, “Video Sermons,” Lakeside, Dallas.

SPECIAL TOPIC: INSPIRATION

The “once-for-all” faith refers to the truths, doctrines, concepts, worldview teachings of Christianity (cf. 2 Pet. 2:21). This once-given emphasis is the biblical basis for theologically limiting inspiration to the writings of the NT and not allowing later or other writings to be considered revelatory. There are many ambiguous, uncertain, and grey areas in the NT, but believers affirm by faith that everything that is “needed” for faith and practice is included with sufficient clarity in the NT.

This concept has been delineated in what is called “the revelatory triangle”

1. God has revealed Himself in time-space history (REVELATION)
2. He has chosen certain human writers to document and explain His acts (INSPIRATION)
3. He has given His Spirit to open the minds and hearts of humans to understand these writings, not definitively, but adequately for salvation and an effective Christian life (ILLUMINATION)

The point of this is that inspiration is limited to the writers of Scripture. There are no further authoritative writings, visions, or revelations. The canon is closed. We have all the truth we need to respond appropriately and pleasingly to God.

This truth is best seen in the agreement of biblical writers versus the disagreement of sincere, godly believers. No modern writer or speaker has the level of divine leadership that the writers of Scripture did.

19:7-11 “restoring. . .making. . .rejoicing. . .enlightening. . .enduring. . .righteous. . .more desirable. . .sweeter. . .warned. . .keeping” This is what the written revelation does for us. Oh, the value of Scripture for fallen humanity!

Notice the threefold parallels.

	Titles for YHWH's Revelation	Description of YHWH's Revelation	Purpose of YHWH's Revelation or Description of It
v. 7a	the law of the LORD	perfect/blameless	restoring the soul
v. 7b	the testimony of the LORD	sure	making wise the simple (cf. Ps. 119:98-100)
v. 8a	the precepts of the LORD	right	rejoicing the heart (cf. Ps. 119:14)
v. 8b	the commandment of the LORD	pure	enlightening the eyes (cf. Ps. 36:9; 119:130)
v. 9a	the fear of the LORD	clean	enduring forever
v. 9b	the judgments of the LORD	true	righteous altogether (cf. Deut. 32:4; Ps. 119:138)
v. 10a	they	more desirable	gold, fine gold (cf. Ps. 119:72, 127)
v. 10b	they	sweeter	honey, honey comb (cf. Ps. 119:103)
v. 11a		keeping them	great reward
v. 11b		Your servant	warned

What powerful repetition and parallelism! God's revelation is redemptive, informative, prescriptive, and a real blessing! Oh, thank God for revelation!

19:8-9 “righteous” The Hebrew root originally meant “a measuring reed.” It speaks of a standard for judgment. God Himself is that standard. See Special Topic at Ps. 1:5.

19:9 “fear” This FEMININE NOUN (BDB 432, KB 433) means “revere” or “with awe and respect.” The concept is used often in Wisdom Literature (cf. Job 4:6; 6:14; 22:4; 28:28; Ps. 5:7; 34:11; 90:11; 111:10; 119:38; Pro. 1:7; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26-27; 15:16; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17). The recurrent message is that awe/respect/fear are the beginning of wisdom! Without God there is no truth, just fallen human opinions and traditions (cf. Isa. 29:13).

▣ **“enduring forever”** This same truth is expressed by Jesus in Matt. 5:18; 24:35; Mark. 13:31; Luke 21:33.

19:10 “they are more desirable than gold. . .honey” Does this describe your attitude toward God's revelation? Is your Bible your most precious property?

19:11 “the servant is warned” God has given us a guideline for a life of peace and joy, but it must be lived out! There is a divine path (see note at Ps. 1:1) and we must stay on it (cf. Matt. 7:13-14).

19:12-13 These verses are a recognition and prayer that amidst our current fallen ignorance and folly God will deal effectively with our fallen nature.

1. “Who can discern his errors?” (cf. Ps. 40:12). Only God knows the heart. He must judge (cf. Ps. 139:23-24; 1 Cor. 4:4-5; Heb. 4:12-13).
2. “Acquit me of hidden faults.” This is an IMPERATIVE of prayer (BDB 667, KB 720, *Piel* IMPERATIVE). Notice it is “hidden faults,” not open-eyed rebellion (cf. Lev. 4:2, 22, 27; 5:15-18; 22:14).

3. “Keep back from presumptuous sins.” This is another IMPERATIVE of prayer (BDB 362, KB 359, *Qal* IMPERATIVE). This is open-eyed rebellion.

The ADJECTIVE “presumptuous” (BDB 267) is used several times in Psalm 119 (cf. vv. 21, 51, 69, 78, 85, 122) and translated “arrogant,” which denotes an attitude of rebellion. In this context it refers to known sins.

4. “Let them not rule over me.” This VERB is a *Qal* IMPERFECT but is used in a JUSSIVE sense. This is another point of prayer. Sin is a slave-master (cf. Rom. 5:21; 6:9, 14, 17, 23).

The last two lines of v. 13 state the requested results of the psalmist’s prayer.

1. I shall be blameless
2. I shall be acquitted of great transgression

The psalmist had great confidence in YHWH’s desire and ability to forgive and forget sin/sins (cf. Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19). We only learn of the mechanism of this forgiveness in the NT record and interpretation of the life, teachings, death, resurrection, ascension, and return of Jesus the Christ (i.e., the gospel). As the Psalm extols the wonder and greatness of God’s written revelation, only the NT reveals the splendor of God’s incarnate revelation (i.e., the Living Word)! Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:13-17; Heb. 1:2-3).

19:14 In light of the power of God’s revelation and His marvelous forgiveness, the psalmist continues his prayer.

1. Let the words of my mouth (one VERB, BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, controls #1,2,3)
2. Let the meditations of my heart
3. “Acceptable” (BDB 953) is
 - a. a common sacrificial term in Leviticus
 - b. a very common word in Wisdom Literature

NIV translates it as

- 1) pleased/pleasing/pleasure
- 2) acceptable/accepted
- 3) favor/favored
- 4) fitting
- 5) delight

Once we know Him and are changed by Him, we want to live in a way that pleases Him. A way that brings others to Him. True forgiveness must issue in a changed and changing life of godliness (cf. Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eps. 1:4; 4:13; 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:15)! The goal of biblical faith is not heaven when we die but Christlikeness now!

▣ Several descriptive titles close this Psalm as they started Psalm 18 (i.e., v. 2).

1. YHWH (i.e., ever-living, ever-present, only God)
2. Rock
3. Redeemer (*Qal* PARTICIPLE, see Special Topic below)

SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM

I. OLD TESTAMENT

A. There are primarily two Hebrew legal terms which convey this concept.

1. *Ga'al* (BDB 145, I), which basically means “to free by means of a price paid.” A form of the term *go'el* adds to the concept a personal intermediary, usually a family member (i.e., kinsman redeemer). This cultural aspect of the right to buy back objects, animals, land (cf.

Leviticus 25:27), or relatives (cf. Ruth 4:14; Isa. 29:22) is transferred theologically to YHWH's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Ps. 74:2; 77:15; Jer. 31:11). He becomes "the redeemer" (cf. Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Pro. 23:11; Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16; Jer. 50:34).

2. *Padah* (BDB 804), which basically means "to deliver" or "to rescue"
 - a. the redemption of the firstborn (Exod. 13:13,14 and Num. 18:15-17)
 - b. physical redemption is contrasted with spiritual redemption (Ps. 49:7,8,15)
 - c. YHWH will redeem Israel from their sin and rebellion (Ps. 130:7-8)
- B. The theological concept involves several related items.
 1. There is a need, a bondage, a forfeiting, an imprisonment.
 - a. physical
 - b. social
 - c. spiritual (cf. Ps. 130:8)
 2. A price must be paid for freedom, release, and restoration.
 - a. of the nation of Israel (cf. Deut. 7:8)
 - b. of the individual (cf. Job 19:25-27; 33:28)
 3. Someone must act as intermediary and benefactor. In *ga'al* this one is usually a family member or near kin (i.e., *go'el*, BDB 145).
 4. YHWH often describes Himself in familial terms.
 - a. Father
 - b. Husband
 - c. Near Kin Redeemer/Avenger

Redemption was secured through YHWH's personal agency; a price was paid, and redemption was achieved!

II. NEW TESTAMENT

- A. There are several terms used to convey the theological concept.
 1. *Agorazō* (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 2 Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:3-4). This is a commercial term which reflects a price paid for something. We are blood-bought people who do not control our own lives. We belong to Christ.
 2. *Exagorazō* (cf. Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). This is also a commercial term. It reflects Jesus' substitutionary death on our behalf. Jesus bore the "curse" of a performance-based law (i.e., Mosaic Law, cf. Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:14), which sinful humans could not accomplish. He bore the curse (cf. Deut. 21:23) for us all (cf. Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21)! In Jesus, God's justice and love merge into full forgiveness, acceptance, and access!
 3. *Luō*, "to set free"
 - a. *Lutron*, "a price paid" (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). These are powerful words from Jesus' own mouth concerning the purpose of His coming, to be the Savior of the world by paying a sin-debt He did not owe (cf. John 1:29).
 - b. *Lutroō*, "to release"
 - (1) to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21)
 - (2) to give Himself to redeem and purify a people (Titus 2:14)
 - (3) to be a sinless substitute (1 Pet. 1:18-19)

- c. *Lutrōsis*, “redemption,” “deliverance,” or “liberation”
 - (1) Zacharias’ prophecy about Jesus, Luke 1:68
 - (2) Anna’s praise to God for Jesus, Luke 2:38
 - (3) Jesus’ better, once offered sacrifice, Heb. 9:12
 - 4. *Apolytrōsis*
 - a. redemption at the Second Coming (cf. Acts 3:19-21)
 - (1) Luke 21:28
 - (2) Romans 8:23
 - (3) Ephesians 1:14; 4:30
 - (4) Hebrews 9:15
 - b. redemption in Christ’s death
 - (1) Romans 3:24
 - (2) 1 Corinthians 1:30
 - (3) Ephesians 1:7
 - (4) Colossians 1:14
 - 5. *Antilytron* (cf. 1 Tim. 2:6). This is a crucial text (as is Titus 2:14) which links “release” to Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross. He is the one and only acceptable sacrifice, the one who dies for “all” (cf. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:14).
- B. The theological concept in the NT.
- 1. Mankind is enslaved to sin (cf. John 8:34; Rom. 3:10-18; 6:23).
 - 2. Mankind’s bondage to sin has been revealed by the OT Mosaic Law (cf. Galatians 3) and Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5-7). Human performance has become a death sentence (cf. Col. 2:14).
 - 3. Jesus, the sinless lamb of God, has come and died in our place (cf. John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21). We have been purchased from sin so that we might serve God (cf. Romans 6).
 - 4. By implication both YHWH and Jesus are “near kin” who act on our behalf. This continues the familial metaphors (i.e., father, husband, son, brother, near kin).
 - 5. Redemption was not a price paid to Satan (i.e., Medieval theology), but the reconciliation of God’s word and God’s justice with God’s love and full provision in Christ. At the cross peace was restored, human rebellion was forgiven, the image of God in mankind is now fully functional again in intimate fellowship!
 - 6. There is still a future aspect of redemption (cf. Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), which involves our resurrection bodies and personal intimacy with the Triune God. Our resurrected bodies will be like His (cf. 1 John 3:2). He had a physical body, but with an extra dimensional aspect. It is hard to define the paradox of 1 Cor. 15:12-19 with 1 Cor. 15:35-58. Obviously there is a physical, earthly body and there will be a heavenly, spiritual body. Jesus had both!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is “general revelation”? What can it tell you about God?
2. What is included in “special revelation”? What can it tell you about God?
3. Why are two different names for God used in this Psalm?
4. Do you find as much joy in the Law of God as this Psalm describes?
5. List characteristics of the Law.
6. What should I do about unknown sins?
7. What are “presumptuous sins”? What is so serious about them in the OT?
8. What is the meaning of verse 14 to you?

PSALM 20

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Victory Over Enemies <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Psalm of David.	The Assurance of God's Saving Work	Prayer for the King's Victory in Battle	A Prayer for Victory	Prayer for the King
20:1-3	20:1-3	20:1-3	20:1-5	20:1-2 20:3-4
20:4-5	20:4-5	20:4-5		20:5a 20:5b
20:6-9	20:6 20:7-8 20:9	20:6-8 20:9	20:6-8 20:9	20:6 20:7-8 20:9

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This may have been a liturgical prelude to battle, as Psalm 21 is a liturgy of welcoming home the victorious king and army.
- B. The offerings of v. 3 (i.e., "meal" and "fat") may have been the expected sacrificial offerings before a battle.

- C. The song/shout and the banners of v. 5 may have been the expected ways of welcoming home a victorious king.

Psalm 21 may be the song referred to in 20:5.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:1-3

¹May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble!

May the name of the God of Jacob set you *securely* on high!

²May He send you help from the sanctuary

And support you from Zion!

³May He remember all your meal offerings

And find your burnt offering acceptable!

Selah.

20:1-3,4-5 This strophe is a prayer, as is vv. 4-5, to plead with YHWH to help His covenant representative (i.e., the Davidic king, cf. 1 Sam. 8:7; 10:19) in battle (cf. vv. 5,7).

Notice the series of IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense (cf. NASB, NRSV, REB, NIV, JPSOA, i.e., prayer requests) in vv. 1-5.

1. May the LORD answer you – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. May the name of the God of Jacob set you securely on high – BDB 960, KB 1305, *Piel* IMPERFECT
3. May He send you help from the sanctuary – BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Qal* IMPERFECT
4. May He support you from Zion – BDB 703, KB 761, *Qal* IMPERFECT
5. May He remember all your meal offerings – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERFECT
6. May He grant you your heart's desire – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 21:2; 37:4
7. May He fulfill all your counsel/purpose – BDB 569, KB 583, *Piel* IMPERFECT
8. May He fulfill all your petitions – same as #7

20:1 “in the day of trouble” This is a recurrent phrase (cf. Gen. 35:3; 2 Kgs. 19:3; Ps. 50:15; 77:3; 86:7; Pro. 24:10; 25:19; Isa. 37:3; Jer. 16:19; Obad. vv. 12,14; Nah. 1:7; Hab. 3:16). It stands for many different life problems that occur in this fallen world. The news is that God is aware of our problems (i.e., Exod. 3:7-8) and is with us in the midst of those problems. He is the answer to all human need and amazingly He is pursuing us!

The term “day” (BDB 398) has several connotations. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: DAY (*YOM*)

Theories of the meaning of *yom* (day) taken and adapted from Dr. John Harris’ (Dean of the School of Christian Studies and Professor of OT at East Texas Baptist University) OT Survey I Notebook:

1. The Literal Twenty-Four Hour Period Theory
This is the straightforward approach (cf. Exod. 20:9-11). Questions arising from this approach:
 - a. How was there light on day one when the sun was not created until day four?
 - b. How were all the animals (especially those original to other parts of the world) named in less than one day? (cf. Gen. 2:19-20)?
2. The Day-Age Theory
This theory attempts to harmonize science (particularly geology) with scripture. This theory states that the “days” were “geological ages” in length. Their length is unequal, and they approximate

the various layers described in uniformitarian geology. Scientists tend to agree with the general development of Gen. 1: vapor and a watery mass preceded the separation of land and sea prior to the appearance of life. Vegetable life came before animal life, and mankind represented the latest and most complex form of life. Questions arising from this approach.

- a. How did plants survive for “ages” without the sun?
- b. How did pollination take place in plants if insects and birds were not made until “ages” later?

3. The Alternate Age-Day Theory

The days are in fact twenty-four hour periods, but each day is separated by ages in which what was created developed. Questions arising from this approach.

- a. The same problems arise as in the Day-Age Theory.
- b. Does the text indicate “day” to be used both as twenty-four hours and as an era?

4. The Progressive Creation-Catastrophe Theory

This theory goes as follows: between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2, there was an indefinite period of time in which the geological ages took place; during this period, the pre-historic creatures in the order suggested by the fossils were created; around 200,000 years ago, a supernatural disaster occurred and destroyed much of the life on this planet and made many animals extinct; then the days of Genesis 1 occurred. These days refer to a re-creation, rather than to an original creation.

5. The Eden-Only Theory

The creation account refers only to the creation and physical aspects of the Garden of Eden.

6. The Gap Theory

Based on Gen. 1:1, God created a perfect world. Based on Gen. 1:2, Lucifer (Satan) was placed in charge of the world and rebelled. God then judged Lucifer and the world by utter destruction. For millions of years, the world was left alone and the geological ages passed. Based on Gen. 1:3-2:3, in 4004 B.C.E., the six literal twenty-four hour days of re-creation occurred. Bishop Ussher (A.D. 1654) used the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 to calculate and date the creation of humanity ca. 4004 B.C.E. However, genealogies do not represent complete chronological schemes.

7. The Sacred Week Theory

The writer of the book of Genesis used the concept of days and a week as a literary device to put across the divine message of the activity of God in creation. Such a structure illustrates the beauty and symmetry of God’s creative work.

8. The Cosmic Temple Inauguration

This is a recent view by John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, IVP. 2009, which sees the six days as a “functional ontology, not a material ontology. They describe God ordering or setting up a functioning universe for mankind’s good. This fits the other ancient cosmologies. For example, the first three days would represent God providing “seasons (i.e. time),” “weather (i.e., for crops)” and food. The repeated phrase “it is good” would denote functionality.

The seventh day would describe God entering His fully functional and inhabited “cosmic temple” as its rightful own, controller and director. Genesis 1 has nothing to do with the material creation of matter but the ordering of that matter for a functioning place for God and humans to fellowship.

The “days” become a literary device to communicate the ANE’s general consensus that

1. there is no distinction between the “natural” and the “supernatural”

2. Deity is involved in every aspect of life. Israel's uniqueness was not her general worldview but the following
 - a. her monotheism
 - b. creation was for mankind, not for the gods
 - c. there is no conflict between the gods nor the gods and humanity in Israel's account.
 She did not borrow her creation account from others but shared their general world-view.

▣ **“the name of the God of Jacob”** There are two Special Topics that illuminate this phrase.

1. Names For Deity at Ps. 1:1
2. The Name of YHWH at Ps. 5:11-12



NASB	“set you securely on high”
NKJV	“defend you”
NRSV, TEV,	
NJB, LXX	“protect you”
JPSOA	“keep you safe”
REB	“be your tower of strength”

The MT VERB (BDB 960, KB 1305, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) is from the root “to be high,” and thereby inaccessible and secure (cf. Ps. 59:1; 69:29; 91:14; 107:41). This is the same imagery of a high, defensible fortress used in Ps. 18:2!

20:2 “from the sanctuary. . .from Zion” These are parallel lines of poetry. Both refer to the temple in Jerusalem. It was not built in David's day but the tabernacle was there. Jerusalem was built on seven hills; the temple was built on Mt. Moriah (cf. 1 Chr. 21:18; 2 Chr. 3:1). Mt. Zion was the site of the Jebusite fortress captured by David (cf. 2 Sam. 5:7; 1 Chr. 11:5), as well as the site for his palace. It came to be the name used for the entire city of Jerusalem and the phrase “daughter of Zion” for the Israelite people (cf. 2 Kgs. 19:21).

Notice that Ps. 20:6 uses the phrase “from His holy heaven,” which is another parallel.

20:3 “Selah” See note at 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:4-5

⁴May He grant you your heart's desire
 And fulfill all your counsel!
⁵We will sing for joy over your victory,
 And in the name of our God we will set up our banners.
 May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.

20:4 “your heart's desire” This is “the” issue of peace and trust. A good example of an appropriate desire for a Davidic King is Solomon's prayer of dedication of the Temple (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:22-61).

20:5

NASB	“We will sing for joy”
NKJV, LXX	“we will rejoice”

NRSV, TEV,

JPSOA “we shout for joy”

NJB “with joy we can hail. . .”

REB “Let us sing aloud your praise”

This VERB (BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* COHORTATIVE) denotes a “shout” for good or bad, depending on the context. Here it is rejoicing over the military victory accomplished by YHWH (cf. Zeph. 3:14).

▣ **“we will set up our banners”** This follows גָּלַל (BDB 186, KB 213, *Qal* IMPERFECT [found only here in the OT] used in a COHORTATIVE sense). It would be an expected welcome procedure for the victorious king and military.

The NET Bible (p. 875) recommends an emendation to another verbal root, גָּלַל, from BDB 162 with PREPOSITION. The NET Bible suggests this fits the parallelism better and also notes Ps. 89:16, where the VERB is used in connection with “in Your name.”

▣ **“petitions”** This rare NOUN (BDB 982) is found only twice in the OT, here and Ps. 37:4. The VERB root (BDB 981) means “ask.” The root occurs in several names (cf. 1 Sam. 9:2,3,5; 1 Chr. 1:48,49; 4:24; 6:24).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:6-9

**⁶Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed;
He will answer him from His holy heaven
With the saving strength of His right hand.
⁷Some *boast* in chariots and some in horses,
But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God.
⁸They have bowed down and fallen,
But we have risen and stood upright.
⁹Save, O LORD;
May the King answer us in the day we call.**

20:6-9 The psalmist (i.e., the King, a priest, or a collective SINGULAR; v. 9 fits this last option best) affirms his confidence that YHWH will respond appropriately.

1. Now I know – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT
2. YHWH saves – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* PERFECT

The VERB denotes a settled confidence (cf. Ps. 56:9; 118:6; Rom. 8:31-39). YHWH will hear and answer positively (cf. 20:6b,c). The King and the covenant people are part of a larger universal redemptive plan for all humanity (see Special Topic at Introduction to Psalm 2).

20:6 “His anointed” This is the Hebrew VERB “anoint” (BDB 603), which became a popular title for God’s Special Coming King (cf. Ps. 2:2; 18:50). See Special Topics

1. OT Titles of the Special Coming One at Ps. 2:2
2. “Messiah” at Ps. 2:2

▣ **“His right hand”** This is a Hebrew idiom of power, authority to act. See Special Topic: Hand at Psalm 7:3-4.

20:7 The VERB “boast” (BDB 269, KB 269, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is literally “cause to remember.” It denotes that which one trusts in.

1. human power (i.e., chariots, horses, soldiers, weaponry, etc.)
2. YHWH and His promises

Here are some good parallel texts – Deut. 20:1; 31:6,8; Jdgs. 7:2; 1 Sam. 17:45,47; 2 Chr. 20:17; 32:8; Ps. 33:16,17; 44:2-3,4-8; 60:11-12; 146:3-7; 147:10; Pro. 21:31; Isa. 31:3; Jer. 17:5; Zech. 4:6! What are you trusting in/boasting about?

▣ **“We will boast”** The VERB (BDB 209, KB 209, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) means “cause to remember” with the connotation of rejoicing or praising in some past event or blessing or person. The concept of “boasting” is significant in the Bible; note especially Jer. 9:23-24. See the use of the concept in Paul’s writings in the Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOASTING

These Greek terms, *kauchaomai*, *kauchēma*, and *kauchēsis*, are used about thirty five times by Paul and only twice in the rest of the NT (both in James). Its predominate use is in 1 and 2 Corinthians.

There are two main truths connected to boasting.

- A. no flesh shall glory/boast before God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:9)
- B. believers should glory in the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17, which is an allusion to Jer. 9:23-24)

Therefore, there is appropriate and inappropriate boasting/glorying (i.e., pride).

- A. appropriate
 - 1. in the hope of glory (cf. Rom. 4:2)
 - 2. in God through the Lord Jesus (cf. Rom. 5:11)
 - 3. in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e., Paul’s main theme, cf. 1 Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 6:14)
 - 4. Paul boasts in
 - a. his ministry without compensation (cf. 1 Cor. 9:15,16)
 - b. his authority from Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 10:8,12)
 - c. his not boasting in other men’s labor (as some at Corinth were, cf. 2 Cor. 10:15)
 - d. his racial heritage (as others were doing at Corinth, cf. 2 Cor. 11:17; 12:1,5,6)
 - e. his churches
 - (1) Corinth (2 Cor. 7:4,14; 8:24; 9:2; 11:10)
 - (2) Thessalonica (cf. 2 Thess. 1:4)
 - (3) his confidence in God’s comfort and deliverance (cf. 2 Cor. 1:12)
- B. inappropriate
 - 1. in relation to Jewish heritage (cf. Rom. 2:17,23; 3:27; Gal. 6:13)
 - 2. some in the Corinthian church were boasting
 - a. in men (cf. 1 Cor. 3:21)
 - b. in wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 4:7)
 - c. in freedom (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6)
 - 3. false teachers tried to boast in the church at Corinth (cf. 2 Cor. 11:12)

20:8 Note the antithetical parallelism. There are consequences to our words/actions!

20:9 “Save, O LORD” This is an exclamatory prayer request (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (cf. Ps. 3:7; 6:4; 17:13)).

▣ **“May the King answer us in the day we call”** The grammatical form of the VERB is a *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. The LXX and several English translations see it referring to the prayers of the people for the King (cf. 20:6; Ps. 21:7; NRSV; TEV; NJB; REB) or “King” may refer to YHWH (cf. Targums’ *UBS Handbook*, p. 202; also note Ps. 98:6; 145:1).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List all the prayer requests that start with “may. . .” in verses 1-5.
2. What does “may He grant you your heart’s desire” mean?
3. Does verse 5 imply a military victory? Why?
4. Who is YHWH’s “anointed”?

PSALM 21

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Praise for Deliverance	Joy In the Salvation of the LORD	Thanksgiving After the King's Victory in Battle (parallel with Psalm 20)	Praise for Victory	For a Coronation Ceremony
<u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Psalm of David.				
21:1-6	21:1-2	21:1-7	21:1-2	21:1-2
	21:3-4		21:3-4	21:3-4
	21:5-7		21:5-6	21:5-7
21:7-13			21:7-9b	
	21:8-12	21:8-10		21:8-10
			21:9c-12	
		21:11-12		21:11-12
	21:13	21:13	21:13	21:13

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Psalm 20 and 21 may be connected. Psalm 20 is the liturgical prayer for victory in battle and Psalm 21 is a liturgical welcoming of the King and soldiers home in victory.

B. Notice the possible strophes. By comparing the strophe divisions from various English translations a person can ascertain how many main truths are expressed in a psalm.

1. NASB – 2
2. NKJV – 5
3. NRSV – 4
4. NJB – 6

Obviously it is difficult to be certain of how to identify strophes. There is often no textual marker. Modern students must

1. check the parallelism
2. check the Hebrew beat pattern
3. check related subject matter (every strophe has one major subject)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:1-6

¹O LORD, in Your strength the king will be glad,
And in Your salvation how greatly he will rejoice!
²You have given him his heart's desire,
And You have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah.
³For You meet him with the blessings of good things;
You set a crown of fine gold on his head.
⁴He asked life of You,
You gave it to him,
Length of days forever and ever.
⁵His glory is great through Your salvation,
Splendor and majesty You place upon him.
⁶For You make him most blessed forever;
You make him joyful with gladness in Your presence.

21:1 Note the synonymous parallelism between “in Your strength” and “in Your salvation.”

The term (BDB 447, FEMININE SINGULAR) translated salvation has several possible connotations.

1. prosperity – Job 30:15
2. deliverance/help – 2 Sam. 10:11; 1 Chr. 19:12; Ps. 22:1
3. salvation – Gen. 49:18; Ps. 3:2,8; 14:7; 35:3; 53:6; 62:2; and many more
4. victory – Exod. 15:2; Ps. 20:6; 21:1,5; 44:4; 68:20-21; 118:14,15,21

YHWH is our great hope and there is no other! In light of this, faithful followers (in this context, the King) will continue to

1. be glad – BDB 970, KB 1330, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 9:2
2. rejoice – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 9:14

21:2 This verse seems to link to Ps. 20:4 and is connected to the King's prayer for military victory.

Notice the two parallel PERFECT VERBS (i.e., completed action).

1. has given – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT
2. has not withheld – BDB 586, KB 602, negated, *Qal* PERFECT



NASB, NKJV,
NRSV “request”
NJB “prayer”
LXX “wish”
NEB “ask”

The word (BDB 77, KB 92) is found only here in the OT. It seems, in context, to refer to a ritual liturgical prayer before a battle, possibly in the tabernacle/temple.

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Ps. 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII. Some commentators feel it denotes a point in the liturgy where there is a transition to another liturgical act (i.e., praise, song, sacrifice, another liturgy read, bowing, etc.).

21:3-6 These are the actions of YHWH on behalf of the King.

1. meet him with the blessings of good things (i.e., YHWH Himself welcomes the victorious king)
2. set a crown of fine gold on his head (i.e., a reaffirmation of kingship or the liturgical transfer of the battle helmet for the royal crown)
3. gave him his prayer for life (i.e., victory in battle)
4. placed upon him
 - a. splendor (BDB 217)
 - b. majesty (BDB 214) – these are descriptions of YHWH (cf. 1 Chr. 16:27; Ps. 45:3; 96:6; 104:1; 111:3), but because of YHWH’s image in mankind, they share these attributes (cf. Ps. 8:5)
5. make him blessed for a long life (‘*olam* must be interpreted in context, see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5; a literary parallel would be “long live the king,” cf. 1 Sam. 10:24; 1 Kgs. 1:25,31,34,39; Dan. 2:4; 3:9)
6. make him joyful in Your presence

It is not just the King who is the recipient of YHWH’s actions, but through him all the covenant people.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:7-13

⁷For the king trusts in the LORD,
And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he will not be shaken.
⁸Your hand will find out all your enemies;
Your right hand will find out those who hate you.
⁹You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger;
The LORD will swallow them up in His wrath,
And fire will devour them.
¹⁰Their offspring You will destroy from the earth,
And their descendants from among the sons of men.
¹¹Though they intended evil against You
And devised a plot,
They will not succeed.
¹²For You will make them turn their back;
You will aim with Your bowstrings at their faces.
¹³Be exalted, O LORD, in Your strength;
We will sing and praise Your power.

21:7 “the king trusts in the LORD” This is an affirmation of the king’s faith orientation (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. Ps. 4:5; 9:10; 13:5; 22:4,5,9; and many more). The king has strength, joy, and deliverance only through YHWH.

▣ **“the lovingkindness of the Most High”** The special covenant term, “lovingkindness” (*hesed*, BDB 338, see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7) means YHWH’s covenant loyalty. YHWH is always faithful, the King and the nation will be also, if they continue to “trust” (BDB 105, KB 120) in Him (cf. Ps. 125:1). Nehemiah 9 is a record of YHWH’s faithfulness and Israel’s unfaithfulness!

For “Most High” (*Elyon*, BDB 751) see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1, B.



NASB, LXX,

JPSOA “he will not be shaken”

NKJV, NRSV “he shall not be moved”

TEV “he will always be secure”

NJB “will keep him from falling”

The VERB (BDB 556, KB 555, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) means “totter,” “shake,” or “slip.” It can be used in several senses.

1. place on the throne
2. security in life
3. godly lifestyle

To see the different senses see Ps. 10:6; 15:5; 16:8; 21:7; 30:6; 62:2,6; 112:6; Pro. 10:30; 12:3. There is stability in YHWH but not in a fallen world.

21:8-12 These verses describe what YHWH (i.e., through the king’s army) will do if the king and people stay faithful.

1. power over your enemies
2. your enemies will be destroyed
3. your enemies and their descendants will be cut off and disappear
4. your enemies will not succeed in their plans (i.e., to plan against YHWH’s king and covenant people is to plan against Him, cf. v. 11a; Ps. 2:1-3; 83:1-5)
5. your enemies will retreat in battle

Some scholars (AB) see these verses as describing YHWH’s actions in battle on behalf of His covenant king and people.

▣ **“hand”** This is a Hebrew idiom of the power to act. See Special Topic: Hand at Ps. 7:3-4.

21:9 “The LORD will swallow them up” This VERB (BDB 118, KB 134, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is an idiom for complete destruction (cf. Job 2:3; 10:8; 19:3; 28:7; Lam. 2:2,5,8).

21:13 This verse concludes the Psalm with commanded praises of YHWH.

1. Be exalted – BDB 926, KB 1202, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. II San. 22:47; Ps. 18:46; 46:10; 57:5,11; 108:5
2. We will sing – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
3. We will praise – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* COHORTATIVE

▣ **“Your strength”** This mantra begins the Psalm (cf. v. 1) and closes (cf. v. 13) the Psalm. God is the chief character of the Bible. It is His book; it is about Him!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How are Psalm 20 and 21 related?
2. Does verse 4 imply eternal life?
3. List the military imagery in verses 7-13.

PSALM 22

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Cry of Anguish and A Song of Praise	The Suffering, Praise, and Posterity of the Messiah	Prayer for Deliverance from Mortal Illness (A Lament)	A Cry of Anguish and A Song of Praise	The Suffering and Hopes of the Upright
<u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; upon aijelet hashshahar. A Psalm of David.				
22:1-5	22:1-2	22:1-2	22:1-5	22:1-2
	22:3-5	22:3-5		22:3-5
22:6-8	22:6-8	22:6-8	22:6-8	22:6-8
22:9-10	22:9-11	22:9-11	22:9-11	22:9-11
22:11-18				
	22:12-13	22:12-13	22:12-13	22:12-13
	22:14-15	22:14-15	22:14-15	22:14-15
	22:16-18	22:16-18	22:16-18	22:16-18
22:19-21	22:19-21b	22:19-21a	22:19-21	22:19-21
	22:21c	22:21b-24		
22:22-24	22:22-24		22:22-24	22:22-23
				22:24
22:25-31	22:25-26	22:25-26	22:25-26	22:25-26
	22:27-28	22:27-28	22:27-28	22:27-31
	22:29	22:29-31	22:29-31	
	22:30-31			

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Hermeneutical practice demands that modern interpreters take seriously the original author's intent as the beginning point in establishing a proper understanding of the meaning of any passage. This proves to be difficult in this psalm.
 1. uncertainty of the inspiration of the MT introductions (i.e., not present in Dead Sea Scrolls)
 2. the details do not fit the life of King David or any other OT person
 3. the striking similarity to the experiences of Jesus on the cross (cf. Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34)
- B. Therefore, how should modern interpreters classify this psalm?
 1. typology (i.e., an event in the OT parallels an event in Jesus' life)
 2. predictive prophecy
 3. multiple fulfillment prophecy
 4. historical account (in poetry) of the experience of an OT person
- C. There are several unique elements that cannot be reconciled with an OT psalmist's historical setting.
 1. crucifixion (i.e., "pierced," see note)
 2. clothes gambled for by lot
 3. rare assertion of the inclusion of the nations, v. 27
 4. possible allusion to
 - a. eternal life, v. 26c
 - b. affect on the departed, v. 29
 - c. creation of a "seed" of faithful followers for generations to come
 5. notice there is no call for vengeance or attack on the enemies
- D. I will approach the psalm, as others, from a historical, grammatical, lexical orientation, but with an eye toward the death of Christ. I can do nothing less!
- E. This psalm is quoted or alluded to in the NT in connection to Jesus' crucifixion. The NT is the proper lens to view the OT, not vice-verse! The NT (i.e., Jesus) is the ultimate revelation (cf. Matt. 5:17-48).
 1. v. 1 – Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34
 2. v. 7 – Matt. 27:39; Mark 15:29
 3. v. 8 – Matt. 27:43
 4. v. 16 – Matt. 27:35; John 20:25
 5. v. 18 – Matt. 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24
 6. v. 22 – Heb. 2:12
 7. possibly v. 15 – in John 19:28

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:1-5

¹My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?

Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.

²O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer;

And by night, but I have no rest.

³Yet You are holy,

O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel.

⁴In You our fathers trusted;

They trusted and You delivered them.

⁵To You they cried out and were delivered;

In You they trusted and were not disappointed.

22:1 There are repeated VOCATIVE type statements.

1. My God, my God, v. 1 (the doubling is for intensity)
2. O my God, v. 2 (*Eloh*, BDB 43)
3. O LORD, 22:19a (YHWH, BDB 217)
4. O You my help, 22:19b

The psalmist is calling on God in direct address with intensity and passion. They know each other!

Just a note about Jesus quoting the first part of this psalm from the cross, by that He meant (or an inspired gospel writer) for future readers to read the whole psalm. Quoting the first line was a way to denote a context on a Scripture scroll.



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, NJB “forsaken”

TEV, JPSOA “abandoned”

This VERB (BDB 736 I, KB 806, *Qal* PERFECT) means to leave or reject by abandoning. The PERFECT denotes the idea of a settled rejection. In several places the OT uses the term of YHWH rejecting His covenant people and promises (cf. Ps. 119:8; Isa. 54:7; Jer. 7:12; Ezek. 8:12), but thank God for Gen. 28:15 and the second line of Isa. 54:7.

Notice the very personal aspect of this rejection or abandonment (i.e., “me,” cf. Matt. 27:46). The psalmist felt alone and betrayed by YHWH. He did not understand why. It was not because of any perceived sin (i.e., omission or commission).

▣ The second line has no VERBAL. NKJV, NRSV, REB, JPSOA all add “Why are you. . .,” making it a question. The psalmist is “groaning” (BDB 980, cf. Job 3:24; Ps. 32:3). The Hebrew word can refer to the roar of a lion (cf. Job 4:10), but here to a human groan of psychological and physical pain and confusion, which fits this context best. The psalmist could not understand why the covenant God had rejected a faithful covenant person (cf. 22:2).

This terrible sense of alienation, loneliness, and spiritual confession is the result of the Fall (cf. Genesis 3). Mankind, made in YHWH’s image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8), has been damaged. The estrangement is terrible. In this case the sense of YHWH’s silence is accentuated because the psalmist knew Him. The psalmist could not understand the silence from God and the vicious attack of others! But there was a purpose (i.e., the gospel, cf. Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21)!

22:2 The psalmist’s persistent prayer goes unheard by God or at least He does not apparently respond (cf. Ps. 42:3; 88:1-2).

The second line of v. 2 is difficult to translate. Literally “there is no silence for me.” This could mean

1. he prays all night (NKJV, REB)

2. God remains silent
3. he finds no rest (LXX, TEV, JPSOA)

If this reflects Jesus' future experience, then the last night in the Garden of Gethsemane before His arrest fits best (cf. Matt. 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42).

22:3-5 The psalmist describes God as

1. holy (cf. Ps. 99:9)
2. enthroned upon the praises of Israel (i.e., YHWH dwells between the wings of the *Cherubim* above the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies)
3. trusted in by the Patriarchs
 - a. they prayed, He delivered
 - b. they trusted and were not disappointed (i.e., there is historical precedent to trust in YHWH)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:6-8

⁶**But I am a worm and not a man,
A reproach of men and despised by the people.**
⁷**All who see me sneer at me;
They separate with the lip, they wag the head, *saying*,**
⁸**“Commit *yourself* to the LORD; let Him deliver him;
Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.”**

22:6-8 In spite of 22:3-5 and God's faithful actions in the past to those who trusted in Him, the psalmist did not feel helped.

1. he felt like a worm, v. 6 (cf. Job 25:6; Isa. 41:14)
2. he was reproached and despised by people, v. 6b
3. they sneered at him, v. 7 (see Matt. 27:39; Mark 15:29)
4. they mocked his faith and prayers, v. 8
 - a. commit (lit. “roll,” cf. Ps. 37:5; Pro. 16:3) – BDB 164, KB 193, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (cf. Matt. 27:43)
 - b. let Him deliver him – BDB 812, KB 930, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (cf. Matt. 27:43)
 - c. let Him rescue him – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:9-10

⁹**Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb;
You made me trust *when* upon my mother's breasts.**
¹⁰**Upon You I was cast from birth;
You have been my God from my mother's womb.**

22:9-10 The imagery of these verses is the predestined purpose of the righteous suffering servant.

1. sometimes an individual (used of Messiah in Isa. 42:1 and of His death in Isa. 52:13-53:12)
2. sometimes the collective people of YHWH (cf. Isa. 41:8-9; 42:18-19; 46:3; 49:1)

This is OT covenant language. It expresses the redemptive purposes of God for Israel (see Special Topic at Intro. to Psalm 2). The psalmist believed he had a purpose in God's plan and could not understand God's seeming abandonment (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

22:10 This verse is reflecting the concept of covenant acceptance by birth (i.e., circumcision). Israelites were born into the covenant people, however, true covenant faith and obedience were the confirming evidence of the reality of their faith. So many Israelites were not truly covenant people (i.e., disobedience to the covenant stipulations, idolatry)!

22:9

NASB, REB “brought me forth”

NKJV “took me out”

NRSV “took me”

NJB, JPSOA “drew me”

LXX “cast from”

This PARTICIPLE (BDB 161, KB 189) occurs only here in the OT. Context gives us a general sense but the exact connotation must remain uncertain. However, the general meaning of the verse is clear.

YHWH is involved in a person’s life even before birth (cf. Job 31:11; Ps. 139:13; Eccl. 11:5; Jer. 1:5). Life begins with God! Humans are created by Him and for Him.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:11-18

¹¹**Be not far from me, for trouble is near;**

For there is none to help.

¹²**Many bulls have surrounded me;**

Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled me.

¹³**They open wide their mouth at me,**

As a ravening and a roaring lion.

¹⁴**I am poured out like water,**

And all my bones are out of joint;

My heart is like wax;

It is melted within me.

¹⁵**My strength is dried up like a potsherd,**

And my tongue cleaves to my jaws;

And You lay me in the dust of death.

¹⁶**For dogs have surrounded me;**

A band of evildoers has encompassed me;

They pierced my hands and my feet.

¹⁷**I can count all my bones.**

They look, they stare at me;

¹⁸**They divide my garments among them,**

And for my clothing they cast lots.

22:11-18 This describes in poetic imagery the suffering of the psalmist. Many of the poetic details and parallelism turned out to be very literal of Jesus’ rejection and crucifixion.

22:11 “Be not far from me” This VERB (BDB 934, KB 1221, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. 22:19; Ps. 71:12) is used in an interpersonal sense, not a distance sense. The psalmist felt alone (“there is none to help,” cf. Isa. 63:5) to face his enemies (i.e., bulls, lions, dogs, wild oxen). Notice the contrast—when trouble is near the psalmist wants YHWH near also!

22:12-13,16-18 His enemies are described.

1. bulls have surrounded him, v. 12
2. lions have attacked him, v. 13 (i.e., opened wide their mouths, which is an idiom for a vicious attack)
3. dogs have surrounded him, v. 16
4. they stare at him
5. they pierced his hands and feet (cf. John 20:25; see note below)
6. they/I can count all my bones (i.e., [1] in the OT this may refer to the suffering man being just skin and bones, [2] he is dead, having been devoured by animals and only his bones are left or [3] in the NT this may refer to the detail that the two thieves' legs were broken to bring about their rapid death on crosses, but Jesus, by this time, had already died)
7. they divided his clothes by casting lots (cf. Matt. 27:35; Luke 23:34; John 19:24)

22:14-15 This is highly figurative language. It is hard to pin down the exact allusion but the accumulative effect is a completely discouraged person in light of

1. YHWH's apparent absence even though the psalmist cries/groans day and night
2. the presence of violent enemies on every side
3. the possibility that the imagery is alluding to symptoms of sickness (cf. Isa. 52:14) or even the early process of bodily decay before death (i.e., lit. "bones scattered about," BDB 825, KB 962)

A striking, painful, surprising feeling from a faithful covenant follower!

22:15

NASB, NKJV,

RSV, LXX "strength"

NRSV, NJB,

REB "mouth"

TEV

"throat"

JPSOA

"vigor"

The UBS Text Project gives the MT's "my strength" (כחי) an "A" rating (high probability). The NRSV, NJB, REB, and TEV reverse the consonants to produce "my palate" (חכי, KB 313, cf. Job 12:11; 20:13; Ps. 119:103; 137:6; Lam. 4:4; Ezek. 3:26).

▣

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

"jaws"

REB

"gums"

TEV

"the roof of my mouth"

NJB

"jaw"

JPSOA

"palate"

LXX

"throat"

This Hebrew word (BDB 544 II, KB 594) occurs only here in the OT. Therefore context, parallelism, and related roots must provide interpreters a possible meaning. But please note that just because we do not know the exact meaning of this word, still the general sense of the verse is obvious.

22:15 "You lay me in the dust of death" The "you" here must refer to YHWH. YHWH (i.e., the only causality in the universe) allowed the psalmist to approach death (i.e., IMPERFECT VERB, cf. Psalm 104:29).

This fits into the NT understanding of Jesus' vicarious, substitutionary death on our behalf as YHWH's predestined will (cf. Luke 22:28; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 1 Pet. 1:20).

Jesus was incarnated for several purposes.

1. fully reveal the Father
2. fully reveal His redemptive plan (i.e., the gospel)
3. die in our place, for our sin
4. show us what humans were created to be

It is crucial in interpreting these oblique OT texts to see the full and complete revelation of the NT. The NT is the perfect fulfillment of the OT (cf. Matt. 5:17-48). The story is fully understood only in Jesus, the Messiah!

22:16

NASB, NKJV,

RSV

“they have pierced”

NRSV

“shriveled” (Akkadian root)

TEV

“tear at”

LXX

“gouged” or “dig”

NJB, NEB

“hack off”

JPSOA (cf. Isa. 38:13) **“like lions (they maul, cf. v. 13)”**

REB (footnote)

“bound”

NET Bible

“like a lion they pin”

This verse is not quoted directly in the NT Gospels related to Jesus' crucifixion. Several other verses of this Psalm are. The real question is “What does the Hebrew say?”

1. The UBS Text Project gives “like a lion” (כֶּאֱרִי, BDB 71) a “B” rating.
2. The VERB “dig,” “bore,” or “pierce” comes from רוּץ, BDB 468 II (found only here).
3. “Bound” or “tie” comes from the Greek translation of Aquila, Symmachus, the Latin translation of Jerome, and two Hebrew MSS (cf. *UBS Handbook*, p. 221). They assume the root is רָכַן, BDB 501, KB 497, but there are no OT examples of it.
4. See a good technical note in Gleason Archer's *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, p. 37.

Usually this idea of being pierced refers to a violent death by sword or spear in battle (several different roots but two prophetically significant).

1. Zech. 12:10 – BDB 201, KB 230 (cf. John 19:37; Rev. 1:7)
2. Isa. 53:5 – BDB 319, KB 320

The ambiguity (i.e., rarity, only here in the OT) of this word allows it to function in an OT sense and a NT sense. This Psalm must have had meaning in its day but obviously points beyond to the vicarious, substitutionary atonement of Christ (i.e., nails pierced His hands and feet). The full meaning of many OT texts comes to light only in Christ (i.e., typology or direct prediction). I think it was Jesus Himself who showed these texts of His suffering and resurrection to the two on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:13-43) and they told the ones in the upper room. Just then He appeared to them and showed them His hands and feet (cf. Luke 24:36-43).

22:14-15,17 These verses describe how the suffering/attacked author feels.

1. I am poured out like water
2. all my bones are out of joint (i.e., this was one result of crucifixion)
3. my heart is like wax
4. my strength (or “palate”) is dried up (this possibly relates to Jesus taking some wine just before His last words, cf. Matt. 27:48; Mark 15:36; John 19:29)

It is not certain how or if v. 17a relates to v. 14b. We are dealing with Hebrew poetic parallelism! Remember this is not prose. This is figurative language. Be careful of pushing details for theological purposes, unless it is done by an inspired NT author!

22:16 “a band of evildoers” The word “band” (BDB 417) means gathering or assembly. A different word (BDB 874) is used of the same concept in vv. 22 and 25. What a contrast between these two assemblies.

1. evil men with evil purposes gather together
2. godly men with witness and worship purposes gather together (cf. Ps. 1:5)

Which group do you want to be a part of?

22:18 In the OT this would refer to the spoils of war being divided among the victors! Notice there is no parallel OT passage. In the NT it refers to the fact that the Roman soldiers who carried out the crucifixion were allowed to divide the condemned person’s possessions among themselves as a payment for the extra duty.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:19-21

- ¹⁹**But You, O LORD, be not far off;
O You my help, hasten to my assistance.**
- ²⁰**Deliver my soul from the sword,
My only *life* from the power of the dog.**
- ²¹**Save me from the lion’s mouth;
From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me.**

22:19-21 Verse 19 links to verse 11. The JUSSIVE (see note below) is followed by three IMPERATIVES OF REQUEST.

1. hasten to my assistance – BDB 301, KB 300, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 38:22; 40:13; 70:1,5; 71:12; 141:1
1. deliver my soul – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. save me – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

This strophe closes “You answered me” with a *Qal* PERFECT VERB (BDB 772, KB 851) which implies that the psalmist has come to the conviction that YHWH is/will answer him (cf. Ps. 34:4; 118:5; 120:1).

Notice again how the psalmist characterizes his enemies.

1. the sword (i.e., “pierced” of possibly the bite of dogs, cf. v. 16)
2. paw of the dog (cf. v. 16)
3. the lion’s mouth (cf. v. 13; 35:17)
4. the horns of the wild oxen (symbol of power, cf. Job 39:9-10)

22:19 “be not far off” See note at 22:11.

22:20 “from the sword” It is difficult to know exactly what problems/distresses/enemies the psalmist is facing.

1. sickness
2. rebellion
3. invasion

Because of the many links to Jesus’ life, I think “sword” is figurative language (cf. Ps. 37:12-15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:22-24

- ²²I will tell of Your name to my brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.**
- ²³You who fear the LORD, praise Him;
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel.**
- ²⁴For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from him;
But when he cried to Him for help, He heard.**

22:22-24 In a sense this strophe overlaps with vv. 25-31. Both speak of witness and praise of YHWH in a worship setting (i.e., the assembly, v. 22; the great assembly, v. 25). The difference is the scope of the help.

1. vv. 22-24 – the afflicted
2. vv. 25-31 – the world

22:22 There are two COHORTATIVE VERBS.

1. I will tell – BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
2. I will praise – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

22:23 Notice the parallelism.

1. you who fear the LORD
2. you descendants (lit., seed) of Jacob
3. you descendants of Israel

They are to

1. praise Him – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
2. glorify Him – BDB 457, KB 455, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. stand in awe of Him – BDB 158, KB 185, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

22:24 The reasons for the praise, glory, and awe to YHWH are

1. He has not despised (BDB 102, KB 117, *Qal* PERFECT) the afflicted
2. He has not abhorred (BDB 1055, KB 1646, *Piel* PERFECT) the afflicted
3. He has not hidden His face (BDB 711, KB 771, *Hiphil* PERFECT) from the afflicted
4. When the afflicted cried to Him for help, He heard (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* PERFECT)

The psalmist now feels YHWH has heard his cries for help and will respond (cf. vv. 21,22-24). This is a reversal of vv. 1-2,8,11,19.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:25-31

- ²⁵From You comes my praise in the great assembly;
I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him.**
- ²⁶The afflicted will eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
Let your heart live forever!**
- ²⁷All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD,
And all the families of the nations will worship before You.**

²⁸For the kingdom is the LORD's

And He rules over the nations.

²⁹All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship,

All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him,

Even he who cannot keep his soul alive.

³⁰Posterity will serve Him;

It will be told of the Lord to the *coming* generation.

³¹They will come and will declare His righteousness

To a people who will be born, that He has performed *it*.

22:25-26 The setting is a worship setting, probably the tabernacle/temple (i.e., “pay vows” and “eat and be satisfied”). The worshippers are characterized as “the afflicted” (BDB 776) from v. 24. They are the ones who

1. seek YHWH, v. 26 – BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
2. praise YHWH, v. 26 – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERFECT

22:26 “Let your heart live forever” This VERB (BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* JUSSIVE) reflects the common idiom used of the Kings of Israel/Judah. The psalmist is a king. There seems to be fluidity in vv. 28-31 between the covenant God and His kingly representative (i.e., Messiah, cf. 2 Sam. 7:1-17).

22:27 The universal emphasis is shocking and unmistakable.

1. all the ends of the earth (cf. Isa. 45:22; 49:6; 52:10; 66:23; Jer. 16:19; Micah 5:4)
2. all the families of the nations (cf. Gen. 12:3; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8)

Notice what the nations will do.

1. remember YHWH – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. turn to YHWH – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT (this VERB is often used of repentance)
3. worship before You/Him – BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishtaphel/Hithpalel* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 66:4; 86:9

22:28 The reason for the universal emphasis is given. This has always been YHWH's desire. It is the clear implication of Gen. 1:26-27 and the theological assertion of monotheism!

1. The kingdom is YHWH's (cf. Ps. 47:7-9; 67:4; Obad. v. 21; Zech. 14:9)
2. He rules over the nations (cf. Ps. 47:8; 1 Chr. 16:31)

22:29 This verse is difficult to translate. Literally it would be

“all those in full vigor shall eat and prostrate themselves;

all those at death's door, whose spirits flag, shall bend the knee before Him” (JPSOA)

There is obviously a contrast between the wealthy and the poor/dying. The thrust of the verse is that everyone, everywhere will worship YHWH/His Messiah. Can we go so far as to see this verse as teaching an afterlife? In light of the NT's use of this Psalm as referring to Jesus' death, maybe so (cf. Luke 23:39-43).

One wonders if v. 29b has any connection to Phil. 2:10. The NT asserts that one day every knee shall bow.

1. the lost
2. the saved

This bowing in judgment is not an act of faith for the lost, but an acknowledgment of a fair judgment.



NASB, NKJV “even he who cannot keep his soul alive”
NRSV “and I shall live for him”
NJB “those who are dead”
REB “But I shall live for his sake”

The MT is reflected in the NASB, which the UBS Text Project gives a “C” rating (considerable doubt). The LXX is reflected in the NRSV, which involves the emendation of two consonants.

MT – ונפשו לא חיה

LXX – ונפשי ל חיה

22:30-31 A new faith seed/family/descendant will come from the terrible suffering event. They will serve the Suffering One and declare His righteousness (i.e., innocence)!

22:31

NASB “He has performed *it*”
NKJV “He has done *this*”
NRSV “he has done it”
TEV “the LORD saved his people”
NJB “he has fulfilled it”
LXX, JPSOA,
REB “the LORD acted”

The VERB (BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* PERFECT) speaks of an accomplished task (cf. 1 Sam.26:25; Dan. 8:24). In light of NT usage this refers to mankind’s redemption on Calvary (cf. Rom. 5:12-21), evidenced and verified by the empty tomb (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-28)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is this Psalm a prediction, a typology, or a multi-fulfillment prophecy?
2. List the possible connections between this psalm and Jesus’ death.
3. The psalmist calls his adversaries by names of several animals. List them.
4. Why is there doubt about the word “pierced” in verse 16?
5. Explain the mood shift at verse 22.
6. Why are verses 27-29 so theologically significant?

PSALM 23

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD, the Psalmist's Shepherd	The LORD the Shepherd of His People	An Expression of confidence in God's Protection (A Song of Trust)	The LORD Our Shepherd	The Good Shepherd
<u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.				
23:1-3	23:1-3	23:1-3	23:1-4	23:1-2a 23:2b-3
23:4-6	23:4 23:5-6	23:4 23:5-6	23:5-6	23:4 23:5 23:6

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is possibly the best known passage in the Bible by the general public; the other ones being John 3:16 or "the love chapter" in 1 Corinthians 13.
This is the biblical worldview of a faithful follower. The focus is on YHWH and His presence, care, and provision!
- B. It uses three distinct cultural metaphors to describe the close personal aspect of biblical faith (i.e., "I," "me," "my").
 1. God as Shepherd; His people as needy sheep, Ps. 23:1-2

2. God as Guide; His people as needy pilgrims, vv. 3-4
 3. God as Host; His people as welcomed guests, vv. 5-6
- C. This Psalm has ten IMPERFECT (ongoing action) VERBS. God is present every day, not just in crisis times. This is the OT counterpoint of Matt. 6:11.
1. I do not lack – BDB 341, KB 338, *Qal* NEGATED IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 34:9,10
 2. He makes me lie down – BDB 918, KB 1181, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
 3. He leads me – BDB 624, KB 675, *Piel* IMPERFECT
 4. He restores my soul – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Polel* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 19:7
 5. He guides me – BDB 634, KB 685, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 5:8; 31:3
 6. Even though I walk – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 7. I fear no evil – BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 27:1
 8. They (i.e., rod and staff) comfort me – BDB 636, KB 688, *Piel* IMPERFECT
 9. You prepare a table before me – BDB 789, KB 884, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 10. Goodness and lovingkindness will pursue me – BDB 922, KB 1191, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 11. I will dwell/turn – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* PERFECT with *waw*, cf. Ps. 27:4-6
- D. The *UBS Handbook* (p. 230) notes that this Psalm does not have synonymous parallelism. The poetic lines do not have symmetry (i.e., same length). It is a climactic progression in succinct wording. Its brevity accentuates its message and power!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:1-3

¹The LORD is my shepherd,
 I shall not want.
²He makes me lie down in green pastures;
 He leads me beside quiet waters.
³He restores my soul;
 He guides me in the paths of righteousness
 For His name's sake.

23:1 The opening line is literally “YHWH is the one shepherding me.” The only VERBAL is the *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE (BDB 944, KB 1258). The concept of YHWH as Shepherd was a royal title in the ANE (i.e., Hammurabi). In the OT it is used in the sense of

1. a description – Ps. 78:52; Ezek. 34:11-13
2. a covenant title – Ps. 80:1
3. a metaphor – Isa. 40:11; Jer. 31:10
4. the Messiah as Shepherd – John 10:11; 1 Peter 2:25

It is such powerful imagery because of

1. the close and constant presence of the shepherd with the sheep
2. the sheep's need of an ever-present caretaker and protector

▣ **“I shall not want”** This is a simple but comprehensive phrase. It cannot refer to every want or need. It denotes that which is necessary for sheep to be healthy. The worst thing God could do for most fallen humans is answer positively their selfish, worldly requests. The Shepherd of our souls will do and give that which is best for us!

23:2 This verse describes verse 1. The Shepherd knows that sheep need

1. rest
2. food
3. water

He provides these in ways that the sheep can accept (i.e., the right food, water they can drink from easily). We are not alone (cf. Psalm 139)! There is purpose in our lives, even in a fallen world. This is not meant to imply a pain-free, problem-free life experience. It does affirm that He is with us, and for us (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13).

23:3 “He restores my soul” This verse addresses and acknowledges the fallen human condition (cf. Isa. 53:6). We need “restoring.” This VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427) is the very VERB used of “repentance,” see Special Topic at 7:12. This same VERB is used in v. 6 of returning to the tabernacle/temple for lifelong fellowship. Faithful followers, motivated by God’s Spirit, must turn from self and sin, and to God. Biblical salvation is

1. a reversal of the fall
2. restored intimacy with God
3. turning from known sin and forgiveness for unknown sin (cf. Ps. 19:12-14)
4. purposeful turning to God (i.e., in fellowship, obedience, and worship, cf. 23:3b)

The Hebrew term “soul” is *nephesh* (BDB 659, KB 711, see note at Ps. 3:2) and can refer to

1. human beings – Gen. 2:7
2. animals – Gen. 1:24; 2:19



NASB, NKJV “in the paths of righteousness”

NRSV, TEV,

JPSOA, REB “in right paths”

NJB “in paths of saving justice”

In context this refers to the safe paths that lead to food and water. The word “right” or “righteousness” (BDB 841, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5) basically has an ethical, moral aspect and surely it is implied here (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10). To know God is to live in obedience to His revealed will. This implication is reenforced by the last phrase of v. 3, “for His Name’s sake” (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12). He “leads” so we may “live” for Him. We as faithful followers reveal Him! He saves us to save others. We are saved to serve!

For the phrase “for His name’s sake,” see Ps. 25:11; 31:3; 79:9; 106:8; 109:21; 143:11. We live to reveal His character and purposes. Often Israel did not (cf. Jer. 14:21; Ezek. 20:9,14,22; 36:22-38).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:4-6

**⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**

**⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You have anointed my head with oil;
My cup overflows.**

**⁶Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

23:4

NASB, NKJV	“the valley of the shadow of death”
NRSV	“the darkest valley”
TEV	“the deepest darkness”
NJB	“a ravine as dark as death”
LXX	“death’s shadow”
JPSOA, REB	“a valley of deepest darkness”

This is a CONSTRUCT of “valley” (BDB 161) and “darkness,” “deep shadow” (BDB 853). Many scholars think צלמות comes from צל and מות.

1. shadow, gloom, darkness – BDB 853, KB 1024
2. death, dying – BDB 560, KB 563

It is used eighteen times in the OT (ten in Job) for

1. death – Job 10:21,22; 38:17; Ps. 107:10,14
2. distress – Job 16:16; 24:17; Ps. 44:20
3. often in context with contrast to light – Job 3:5; 12:22; 24:17; 28:3; 34:22; Jer. 13:16; Amos 5:8

It is used figuratively of the fearful, distressing, and fatal experiences of fallen humanity in this fallen world. Life is fearful but God is with us (cf. 23:4b,c; Deut. 31:6,8; Matt. 28:20; 2 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 13:5).

▣ **“fear. . .comfort”** What a contrast! Faithful ones face trials with confidence because God is with them (i.e., symbolized with the Shepherd’s rod and staff, His instruments of care and protection).

Problems will come! We never face them alone! Never! He will never forsake us or leave us (cf. Deut. 31:6; Jos. 1:5; Heb. 13:5).

23:5 Not only is God with us and for us, He will vindicate us in the very presence of those who would harm us. The culturally expected hospitality is used to demonstrate the extravagant abundance of God’s love.

1. table prepared
2. anointed head
3. overflowing love

▣ **“overflows”** This is a rare word (BDB 924, “saturated”) found only here in the OT. Psalm 66:12 has “place of abundance” (slightly different spelling). The LXX translates it as “Your cup cheers me like the best wine” or “Your cup was supremely intoxicating,” which obviously takes the idea from “saturated” as “intoxicated.”

23:6 “goodness” The VERB (BDB 373), ADJECTIVE (BDB 373 II), and NOUN (BDB 375III) all denote that which is “good,” “pleasing,” “beneficial.” They are used extensively in Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. This is what God wanted to do for His covenant people (i.e., Deut. 30:9,15).

▣

NASB	“lovingkindness”
NKJV, NRSV	“mercy”
TEV	“love”
NJB	“faithful love”
JPSOA	“steadfast love”
REB	“love unailing”

This is the special covenant NOUN *hesed* (BDB 338), which denoted YHWH’s faithful, undeserved covenant loyalty (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7). The covenant loyalty is all the more striking in light of Israel’s disobedience (cf. Neh. 9:6-38).



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, REB “follow”

TEV

“will be with me”

NJB, LXX,

JPSOA “pursue”

This VERB (BDB 922, KB 1191, *Qal* IMPERFECT) has a more aggressive sense than “follow.” It denoted active pursuit. Just think, God’s covenant love chased the Israelites. It is a

1. military word
2. hunting word
3. judicial word

Stop! Turn around! Look who is pursuing you, yes you!

▣ The last line in this OT context does not denote eternal life (other texts do, cf. Rev. 21:3-7; 22:1-5) but a life of covenant goodness (cf. Deut. 30:3,15,19). This was to be lived out in daily life and regular tabernacle/temple worship.

The VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* PERFECT with *waw*) can denote

1. to sit down with (ancients)
2. to return (Hebrew)

▣ “forever” See Special Topic at Psalm 9:5.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is YHWH like a shepherd?
2. How do the VERBS of verses 1-3 apply to the daily life of faithful followers?
3. Define “the valley of the shadow of death.”
4. Does this Psalm foreshadow an afterlife?
5. Why is the Psalm so meaningful to believers of all ages?

PSALM 24

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The King of Glory Enters <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.	The King of Glory and His Kingdom	A Liturgy On Entering the Sanctuary	The Great King	For a Solemn Entry Into the Sanctuary
24:1-6	24:1-2 24:3-6	24:1-2 24:3-6	24:1-2 24:3-6	24:1-2 24:3 24:4 24:5-6
24:7-10	24:7-10	24:7-10	24:7-8 24:9-10	24:7 24:8 24:9 24:10

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is a psalm about
 1. YHWH as creator (vv. 1-2) and warrior (v. 8)
 2. those who can approach Him to worship Him (vv. 3-6)
- B. Notice the consistent use of synonymous parallelism

C. Notice the vocatives

1. O gates, vv. 7,9
2. O ancient doors, vv. 7,9
3. Jacob, v. 6 may be “O Jacob”

D. Notice the titles and descriptive phrases

1. the God of his salvation, v. 5 (cf. Ps. 18:46; 25:5; 51:14; 79:9)
2. the King of glory, vv. 7,8,10 (twice)
3. YHWH strong and mighty, v. 8
4. YHWH mighty in battle, v. 8
5. YHWH of hosts, v. 10

Numbers 3,4,5 have a military connotation.

E. Notice how those allowed to approach YHWH in worship (cf. Psalm 15) at His tabernacle/temple are characterized.

1. he who has clean hands, cf. Job 17:9; 22:30
2. he who has a pure heart, cf. Ps. 73:1
3. he who has not lifted his soul to falsehood, cf. Ezek. 18:15
4. he who has not sworn deceitfully
5. those who seek Him, cf. Ps. 9:10; 24:4,8; 27:8; 34:4; 69:32

This may have been a liturgical chant by Levites as worshipers came on a set feast day.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:1-6

¹The earth is the LORD’S, and all it contains,
The world, and those who dwell in it.

²For He has founded it upon the seas
And established it upon the rivers.

³Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
And who may stand in His holy place?

⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood
And has not sworn deceitfully.

⁵He shall receive a blessing from the LORD
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

⁶This is the generation of those who seek Him,
Who seek Your face—even Jacob. Selah.

24:1-2 These verses emphasize YHWH as creator (cf. Genesis 1-2; Exod. 9:29; 19:5; Ps. 50:12; 89:11; Psalm 104), both inanimate and animate, both animals and humans (cf. Ps. 146:6; Jer. 27:5; 51:15).

In verse 2 the figurative imagery is of the earth founded as water (cf. Ps. 104:3,5; 136:6). Water (both fresh [i.e., rivers] and salty [i.e. seas]) is not said to have been created in Genesis 1. In ANE mythology water referred to a chaos monster. For more information see

1. notes on Gen. 1:2 in Genesis 1-11 online free at www.freebiblecommentary.org

2. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, pp. 545-549, “Divine Warrior”. In the Bible God controls water (cf. Amos 9:6).

He, not the fertility gods, uses it for His purposes.

1. creation and judgment
2. sustain plant and animal life (i.e., annual rains)

24:1 “earth. . . world” The first word (BDB 75) is very common and has a wide semantic field, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:2. The second word (BDB 385) is a poetic SYNONYM used mostly in Psalms and Isaiah.

24:2 “founded. . . established” These two VERBS (cf. Pro. 3:19)

1. BDB 413, KB 417, *Qal* PERFECT
2. BDB 465, KB 414, *Polel* IMPERFECT

are in a parallel relationship. They both assert that YHWH, the creator God, firmly founded the dry land on pillars (cf. 1 Sam.2:8; Job 9:6; Ps. 75:3), which reached to the ocean floor and mountain roots (cf. Job 38:4-6; Ps. 18:7,15; Jonah 2:6).

This is not a modern scientific description but pre-scientific poetic imagery! The Bible was not written to answer or inform modern western science. It is an Ancient Near Eastern book, written in phenomenological language (i.e., as things appear to the five human senses).

24:3-6 This may be a separate strophe (see first page of English translation’s literary units). It discusses those who seek to worship the God of creation (cf. v. 6 and Contextual Insights, E).

The place to worship Him is in His tabernacle/temple in Jerusalem (v. 3). The temple is a symbol of the whole world (cf. Jewish Study Bible, p. 1308, vv. 1-2 and NASB Study Bible, p. 762, v. 2). A new book that has helped me understand Genesis 1-2 as YHWH building His temple is John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*. I hope you will look at it. It has the potential to solve, or at least reduce, the conflict over

1. the age of the earth
2. evolution
3. purpose of Genesis 1-2
4. how Genesis relates to other ANE creation accounts

In order to do this, covenant obedience (cf. Psalm 15) is required (cf. v. 4). The ones who are obedient will receive

1. a blessing from YHWH, v. 5
2. righteousness (i.e., vindication, cf. Isa. 54:17) from the God of his salvation, v. 5

Verses 4-6 answer the two questions posed in verse 3. This strophe seems to be ascension liturgy, sung by Levites as worshipers climb to the tabernacle/temple on Mt. Moriah.

24:4 “lift up” This VERB (BDB 669, KB 724) is used several times in this Psalm.

1. v. 4 – who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood (*Qal* PERFECT)
2. v. 5 – he shall receive (lit. “carry away”) blessing (*Qal* IMPERFECT)
3. vv. 7,9 – lift up your heads, O gates (*Qal* IMPERATIVE)
4. vv. 7,9 – be lifted up, O ancient doors (*Qal* IMPERATIVE)
5. how Genesis relates or does not relate to modern science

▣ **“soul”** This is the Hebrew term *nephesh* (BDB 659). See note at Ps. 3:2 and 23:3.



NASB	“to falsehood”
NKJV	“to an idol”
NRSV, REB	“to what is false”

TEV “worship idols”
 NJB “vanities”
 JPSOA “false oath”

The word (BDB 996) basically means “empty,” “vain,” or “nothingness.” It is used in several senses (see Special Topic below).

SPECIAL TOPIC: EMPTY, VAIN, FALSE, NOTHINGNESS (BDB 996)

This word basically means “empty,” “vain,” or “nothingness.”

1. swearing/using YHWH’s name in vain – Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13; 10:20; Ps. 24:4; 139:20
2. of idols – Ps. 31:6; Jer. 18:15; Jonah 2:8
3. of speech – Ps. 12:2; 41:6; 144:8,11; Pro. 30:8; Isa. 59:3; Ezek. 13:8; Hos. 10:4
4. of motives – Job 15:31; Isa. 5:18; 30:28
5. of prophecy – Job 35:13,16; Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 12:24; 13:6,7,9,23; 22:28
6. of worthless men – Job 11:11; Ps. 26:4
7. of human activity – Ps. 60:13; 89:48; 108:13; 127:2
8. of worthless offerings – Isa. 1:13

This is not the same term as “vanity” (BDB 210 I), used so often in Ecclesiastes. It does occur in Psalm 31:6; 39:5-6,11; 62:9; 78:33; 94:11, 144:4.

▣ If v. 4 has four characteristics of a true faithful follower, and if the second line is parallel to the third, then they both must refer to true testimony in court, instead of v. 4b referring to idolatry. The use of “righteousness” in a judicial sense (cf. v. 5b) gives credence to this. Also note NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 153, where “clean hands” are imagery of a judicial acquittal.

24:6 “seek. . .seek” These translate two different but parallel Hebrew roots.

1. BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PARTICIPLE (MT – SINGULAR, *Qere* – PLURAL), cf. Ps. 78:34
2. BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, cf. Deut. 4:29; 1 Chr. 16:11; 2 Chr. 7:14; Ps. 27:8; 105:4; Hos. 3:5; 5:15; Zeph. 1:6; 2:3

▣ “—*even Jacob*” This could be understood in more than one way.

1. the God of Jacob (LXX)
2. seek God as Jacob sought Him
3. another name for the covenant people (like “generations”); Jacob = Israel

▣ “Selah” See note at Ps. 3:2 and in Introduction to Psalms, VII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:7-10

⁷Lift up your heads, O gates,
 And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
 That the King of glory may come in!
⁸Who is the King of glory?
 The LORD strong and mighty,
 The LORD mighty in battle.

**⁹Lift up your heads, O gates,
And lift *them* up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!**

¹⁰Who is this King of glory?

**The LORD of hosts,
He is the King of glory.**

Selah.

24:7-10 The gates/ancient doors must refer to the gates of Jerusalem at the temple (v. 3). They are personified so as to greet the King of glory, YHWH, as He comes to His house/temple after a victory (cf. Exod. 14:14; 15:3; Deut. 1:30; 3:22, i.e., holy war). It is probable that a procession with the ark of the covenant symbolized YHWH's coming back to the temple. Notice all the commands.

1. lift up your heads – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. be lifted up – BDB 669, KB 724, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
3. that the King of glory may come in – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. lift up your head – same as #1
5. be lifted up – same as #2, but *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. same as #3

The *UBS Handbook* (p. 241) suggests that verse 7 is the liturgical cry of the pilgrims coming to worship. If so, then verses 8 and 10 might be a liturgical Levitical response. I think verses 1-6 comprise a Levitical liturgy spoken by the gatekeepers of the temple.

24:10 There is no VERBAL in this verse. The “to be” VERB is supplied for English readers as it was by ancient Hebrew readers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How are Psalm 15 and Psalm 24 related?
2. Define “falsehood” in its OT sense.
3. What does it mean to “seek Your face”?
4. To what event do verses 7-10 seem to be a liturgical mantra?

PSALM 25

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Prayer for Protection, Guidance and Pardon	A Plea for Deliverance and Forgiveness	Deliverance From Personal Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer for Guidance and Protection	Prayer in Danger (Acrostic)
<u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.				
25:1-3	25:1-3	25:1-2	25:1-3	25:1-2a (<i>Aleph</i>) 25:2b (<i>Bet</i>) 25:3 (<i>Gimel</i>)
		25:3		
25:4-7	25:4-5	25:4-5	25:4-5	25:4 (<i>Dalet</i>) 25:5 (<i>He</i>)
	25:6-7	25:6-7	25:6-7	25:6c-7 (<i>Waw</i>) 25:6 (<i>Zain</i>) 25:7 (<i>Het</i>)
25:8-11	25:8-11	25:8-10	25:8-10	25:8 (<i>Tet</i>) 25:9 (<i>Yod</i>) 25:10 (<i>Kaph</i>)
		25:11-15	25:11-14	25:11 (<i>Lamed</i>)
25:12-15	25:12-15			25:12 (<i>Mem</i>) 25:13 (<i>Nun</i>) 25:14 (<i>Samek</i>)
			25:15-18	25:15 (<i>Ain</i>)
25:16-22	25:16-21	25:16-18		25:16 (<i>Pe</i>) 25:17 (<i>Zade</i>) 25:18 (<i>Qoph</i>)
		25:19-21	25:19-21	25:19 (<i>Resh</i>) 25:20 (<i>Shin</i>) 25:21 (<i>Taw</i>)
	25:22	25:22	25:22	25:22

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is an acrostic (cf. NJB's strophes). However, two letters are missing and two are doubled (Jewish Study Bible, p. 1309).
- B. It is dominated by emphatic prayer requests.
 1. COHORTATIVES
 - a. v. 2 – “do not let me be ashamed,” BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* COHORTATIVE (this root is used four times in this Psalm; it is not so much embarrassment as it is the exposure of faithlessness)
 - b. v. 20 – “do not let me be ashamed, same as a., but *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense (*inclusio*)
 2. IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - a. v. 2 – “do not let my enemies exult over me, BDB 763, KB 836, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - b. v. 7 – “do not remember the sins,” BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERFECT (this root is used three times in vv. 6-7)
 - c. v. 21 – “let integrity and uprightness preserve me,” BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 3. IMPERATIVES
 - a. v. 4 – “make me know Your Ways,” BDB 393, KB 390, *Hiphil*
 - b. v. 4 – “teach me Your paths,” BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel*
 - c. v. 5 – “lead me in Your truth,” BDB 201, KB 231, *Hiphil*
 - d. v. 5 – “teach me,” same as b.
 - e. v. 6 – “remember,” BDB 269, KB 268, *Qal*
 - f. v. 7 – “remember,” same as e.
 - g. v. 16 – “turn to me,” BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal*
 - h. v. 16 – “be gracious to me,” BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal*
 - i. v. 17 – “bring me out of my distress,” BDB 422, KB 425, *Hiphil*
 - j. v. 18 – “look upon my affliction,” BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal*
 - k. v. 18 – “forgive all my sin,” BDB 669, KB 1157, *Qal*
 - l. v. 19 – “look upon my enemies,” same as j.
 - m. v. 20 – “guard my soul,” BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal*
 - n. v. 20 – “deliver me,” BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil*
 - o. v. 22 – “redeem Israel,” BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal*

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:1-3

¹To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

²O my God, in You I trust,

Do not let me be ashamed;

Do not let my enemies exult over me.

³Indeed, none of those who wait for You will be ashamed;

Those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed.

25:1-3 The psalmist fears being ashamed by his enemies but in the midst of his fear he expresses his faith in YHWH's promised victory.

He characterizes himself as one who

1. lifts his soul to YHWH – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT, which denotes continual action (cf. Ps. 86:4; 143:8)
2. trusts in YHWH – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PERFECT, which denotes a settled action/condition
3. waits for YHWH – BDB 875, KB 1082, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, AB (p. 155) suggests it is from another root with the same letters that means “to call” or “to invoke”

Because of this he is confident that he will not be

- a. ashamed (*inclusio*, cf. Ps. 25:20; 31:1)
- b. exulted over (cf. Ps. 41:11)

but that his enemies will be (cf. v. 3b). In a sense those who trust in YHWH are witnesses of His character (see Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel's God at Ps. 9:10b). How they live and trust gives powerful evidence of the reality and character of YHWH.

25:3

NASB, NKJV,

REB “without cause”

NRSV, LXX “wantonly”

NJB “groundlessly”

JPSOA “disappointed, empty-handed”

NET Bible “thwarted”

Peshitta “vanity”

This ADJECTIVE (BDB 938, KB 1229) can be understood in two ways.

1. without cause (cf. Ps. 7:4)
2. to no effect (cf. Isa. 55:11; Jer. 50:9)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:4-7

⁴Make me know Your ways, O LORD;

Teach me Your paths.

⁵Lead me in Your truth and teach me,

For You are the God of my salvation;

For You I wait all the day.

⁶Remember, O LORD, Your compassion and Your lovingkindnesses,

For they have been from of old.

⁷Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;

**According to Your lovingkindness remember me,
For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.**

25:4-7 Notice the string of powerful emphatic IMPERATIVES which requests YHWH's action on behalf of the one who trusts in Him.

1. know (BDB 393, KB 390, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) His ways (BDB 202, cf. Ps. 25:4,8,9,12)
2. teach (BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel* IMPERATIVE) him His paths (BDB 73, cf. 25:4,10)
3. lead (BDB 201, KB 231, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) him in His truth (BDB 54, see Special Topic at Psalm 12:1)
4. teach (BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel* IMPERATIVE) me

The one who trusts (and waits, vv. 5c, 21b) wants to know YHWH in both personal fellowship and revelatory truth. Based on this truth and lifestyle obedience, he then requests that YHWH

1. remember His character (cf. v. 7b,c), see Special Topic at Ps. 9:10b
 - a. compassion – BDB 933 (v. 5)
 - b. lovingkindness – BDB 338 (cf. v. 6,7, see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7)
 - c. goodness – BDB 375 (v. 7)
2. do not remember the sins (BDB 308) of his youth (cf. Job 13:26)
3. do not remember his transgressions (BDB 833)

24:4 “ways...paths” The revelatory truths of YHWH were viewed as a well marked/worn road or trail (see note at Ps. 1:1). There was no confusion about what to do, only the need for obedience to the well-marked path (cf. Ps. 139:24). God's path is often described as level, straight, unobstructed, clearly visible.

24:6 “For they have been from of old” The psalmist is asking YHWH to act towards him (and Israel, cf. v. 22) in the consistent ways that He has displayed in the past (cf. Ps. 89:49). In essence the psalmist wants the covenant God to remember His covenant promises. He has acted in the past, now please act again for Your people and purposes. Even though the psalmist and Israel have sinned foolishly, please let Your covenant love (*hesed*, i.e., covenant loyalty) and Your basic character (i.e., goodness and mercy, cf. Ps. 23:6), forgive the humble sinner (cf. vv. 8-11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:8-11

⁸**Good and upright is the Lord;
Therefore He instructs sinners in the way.**
⁹**He leads the humble in justice,
And He teaches the humble His way.**
¹⁰**All the paths of the Lord are lovingkindness and truth
To those who keep His covenant and His testimonies.**
¹¹**For Your name's sake, O LORD,
Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.**

25:8-11 Many of the key words and concepts from vv. 4-7 are repeated in this strophe. Remember this is an acrostic psalm. All of the psalmist's poetic license and creativity are being used.

1. 25:8a extols YHWH's character, as did vv. 6,7
 - a. good (BDB 373)
 - b. upright (BDB 449)
2. 25:8b-9 again mention YHWH's teaching and leading, as did vv. 4-5

The two added thoughts are the descriptive words about the one taught and led.

1. sinners (BDB 308), v. 8
2. humble (BDB 776), v. 9 (twice)

The paths of YHWH are characterized as

1. lovingkindness (cf. vv. 6,7)
2. truth (cf. v. 5)

25:10 “paths. . .testimonies” See Special Topic: Terms For God’s Revelation at Psalm 1:2.

▣ **“to those who keep His covenant”** Notice the emphasis, not just on knowledge (cf. 25:4-5) but obedience (cf. Deut. 5:10; 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1,13,22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6,16,20; Ps. 103:18). Obedience is not the mechanism of acceptance and forgiveness, which is YHWH but the result of meeting Him and being informed of His will. Jesus said it so well in Luke 6:46, also note Eph. 2:8-9 and then 1:4; 2:10. Grace is always first (cf. 25:11)! It is received by faith but it is a faith that must be lived out (cf. James 2:14-26).

▣ **“covenant”** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT (ברית)

The OT term *berith* (BDB 136), covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching VERB in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological or cognate definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial in understanding the biblical revelation. The tension between God’s sovereignty and human free-will is clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God’s character and actions.

1. creation itself (cf. Genesis 1-2)
2. the call of Abraham (cf. Genesis 12)
3. the covenant with Abraham (cf. Genesis 15)
4. the preservation and promise to Noah (cf. Genesis 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response.

1. by faith Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden
2. by faith Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe in future descendants
3. by faith Noah must build a huge boat far from water and gather the animals
4. by faith Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai and received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28)

This same tension involving God’s relationship to humanity is addressed in the “new covenant.” The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezekiel 18 with Ezek. 36:27-38 (YHWH’s action). Is the covenant based on God’s gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue between the Old Covenant and the New. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship with YHWH lost in Genesis 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God’s character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God’s law becomes an internal desire instead of an external law code. The goal

of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God's reflected image. The problem was not God's covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Romans 7; Galatians 3).

The same tension between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remains in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness, an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved by their performance, but unto obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. However, eternal life has observable characteristics! This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.

25:11 Any hope of forgiveness is based on the unchanging character of YHWH (cf. Ps. 102:26-27; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17, see Special Topic at Ps. 9:10b) and His Messiah (cf. Heb. 13:8). It is because of His name and character (cf. Ps. 79:9).

▣ **“for it is great”** Once we know the character of God (i.e., holiness, cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48) and the truth of God, our sins and their consequences become more evident to us. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil (cf. Genesis 3) brought a revelation of our rebellion and its consequences!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:12-15

¹²**Who is the man who fears the LORD?**

He will instruct him in the way he should choose.

¹³**His soul will abide in prosperity,**

And his descendants will inherit the land.

¹⁴**The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him,**

And He will make them know His covenant.

¹⁵**My eyes are continually toward the LORD,**

For He will pluck my feet out of the net.

25:12-15 As in strophes 4-7 and 8-11, the same themes continue here. Notice how the faithful follower is characterized.

1. he fears YHWH, vv. 12,14, cf. Ps. 15:4; 103:11,13; 115:11; 118:4
2. he knows YHWH's covenant, v. 14
3. his eyes are continually toward YHWH, v. 15

Notice what YHWH will do for him.

1. He will instruct him in the way, v. 12, cf. Ps. 16:11; 139:24
2. He will provide good (BDB 373) for him and his descendants, v. 13
3. He reveals to him His truths, v. 14
4. He will keep his feet on the path and out of harm, v. 15

25:12 “choose” There is a theological balance in the Bible between the sovereign acts of YHWH and His demand that humans choose Him and His ways (cf. Deut. 30:15,19; Jos. 24:14-15). We are responsible for our choices! See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE

Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others' redemption! In the Old Testament the term was used primarily for service; in the New Testament it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God's sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in Ephesians 1:4. Jesus is God's elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind's need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God's call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths:

1. Predestination vs. human free will
2. Security of the believer vs. the need for perseverance
3. Original sin vs. volitional sin
4. Sinlessness (perfectionism) vs. sinning less
5. Initial instantaneous justification and sanctification vs. progressive sanctification
6. Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility
7. God's transcendence vs. God's immanence
8. God as ultimately unknowable vs. God as knowable in Scripture
9. The Kingdom of God as present vs. future consummation
10. Repentance as a gift of God vs. repentance as a necessary human covenantal response
11. Jesus as divine vs. Jesus as human
12. Jesus is equal to the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father

The theological concept of "covenant" unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from humans. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology!

25:14

NASB, NKJV,

NJB

"secret"

NRSV

"friendship"

TEV

"friend"

LXX

"empowerment"

JPSOA

"counsel"

REB

"confides"

The Hebrew word (BDB 691, KB 745) can mean (cf. Job 15:8; Ps. 111:1)

1. confidential discussion – Job 29:4; Ps. 55:14
2. secret counsel – Job 15:8; Pro. 11:13; 20:19; 25:9
3. circle of confidants – Ps. 89:7; Jer. 15:17; 23:18,22

These connotations are fluid and interchangeable. There is a special consultation, fellowship, and impartation of knowledge between the covenant God and His faithful followers.

25:15 As YHWH's eyes (see Special Topic at Ps. 2:4-6) are continuously on those who fear Him and obey Him, so too, the faithful continue to be faithful by keeping their full and focused attention on Him (cf. Heb. 12:2)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:16-22

- ¹⁶**Turn to me and be gracious to me,
For I am lonely and afflicted.**
- ¹⁷**The troubles of my heart are enlarged;
Bring me out of my distresses.**
- ¹⁸**Look upon my affliction and my trouble,
And forgive all my sins.**
- ¹⁹**Look upon my enemies, for they are many,
And they hate me with violent hatred.**
- ²⁰**Guard my soul and deliver me;
Do not let me be ashamed, for I take refuge in You.**
- ²¹**Let integrity and uprightness preserve me,
For I wait for You.**
- ²²**Redeem Israel, O God,
Out of all his troubles.**

25:16-21 This strophe documents the psalmist's problems.

1. I am lonely
2. I am afflicted
3. his heart has troubles
4. he is in distress
5. his enemies are many
6. they hate him with violent rage
7. he fears shame

In light of these things he asks YHWH

1. to turn to him (i.e., pay attention to him, cf. Ps. 69:16; 86:16)
2. to be gracious to him
3. to look upon/know his problems
4. to forgive His sins (cf. 25:18; Ps. 32:1; 51:2; 103:3)
5. to guard his soul (cf. Ps. 86:2)
6. to deliver him

His reasons for YHWH doing these things for him are

1. he takes refuge in YHWH
2. he asserts either his or YHWH's integrity and uprightness (because of 25:18b it is best to see these as characteristics of YHWH. AB (p. 159) suggests they are personified agents of YHWH)
3. he waits for YHWH (cf. Ps. 25:3)

25:22 I think this is a separate closing statement (one verse beyond the acrostic pattern). The King represents the people. This is the psalmist's final prayer request and it is national in scope. Redeem (BDB

804, KB 911, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, see Special Topic at Ps. 19:14) Your covenant people (i.e., “Israel”), for Your eternal redemptive purposes (see Special Topic at Introduction to Psalm 2).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the prayer requests of verses 4-7.
2. List the psalmist’s problem in verses 16-21.
3. How would you summarize the message of this Psalm?
4. How would you apply this Psalm to your life?

PSALM 26

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Protestation of Integrity and Prayer for Protection	A Prayer for Divine Security and Redemption	Prayer for Deliverance from Personal Enemies (A Lament)	The Prayer of a Good Person	Prayer of the Blameless
<u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.				
26:1-7	26:1-5	26:1-3	26:1-3	26:1
				26:2
				26:3
		26:4-5	26:4-5	26:4-5
	26:6-8	26:6-7	26:6-7	26:6-8
26:8-12		26:8-10	26:8-10	
	26:9-10			26:9-10
	26:11-12	26:11-12	26:11	26:11-12
			26:12	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm, like much of Wisdom Literature, is based on the OT concept known as "the two ways" (cf. Deut. 30:15,19; Psalm 1). There is prosperity for those who obey YHWH's word and condemnation for those who do not (i.e., the cursings and blessings of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-29).

- B. The psalmist apparently has been accused of some covenant violation. The best guess is idolatry.
- C. Verse 9 implies an end-of-life separation between the faithful and unfaithful. The afterlife in the OT is a vague (cf. Job 14:7-12,13-14; 19:25-27; Ps. 16:10; 49:15; 73:24; Isa. 25:8; 26:19; Dan. 12:1-4) concept but progressive revelation (i.e., NT) clarifies the issue (cf. Matt. 25:46; John 5:29; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE RESURRECTION

- A. Evidence for the resurrection
 - 1. Fifty (50) days later at Pentecost, the resurrection had become the key note of Peter's sermon (cf. Acts 2). Thousands who lived in the area where it happened believed!
 - 2. The lives of the disciples were changed radically from discouragement (they were not expecting resurrection) to boldness, even martyrdom.
- B. Significance of the resurrection
 - 1. Shows Jesus was who He claimed to be (cf. Matt. 12:38-40 prediction of death and resurrection)
 - 2. God put His approval on Jesus' life, teaching, and substitutionary death! (cf. Rom. 4:25)
 - 3. Shows us the promise to all Christians (i.e. resurrection bodies, cf. 1 Corinthians 15)
- C. Claims from Jesus that He would rise from the dead
 - 1. Matt. 12:38-40; 16:21; 17:9,22, 23; 20:18-19; 26:32; 27:63
 - 2. Mark 8:31; 9:1-10, 31; 14:28,58
 - 3. Luke 9:22-27
 - 4. John 2:19-22; 12:34; chapters 14-16
- D. Further Study
 - 1. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell
 - 2. *Who Moved the Stone?* by Frank Morrison
 - 3. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, "Resurrection," "Resurrection of Jesus Christ"
 - 4. *Systematic Theology* by L. Berkhof, pp. 346, 720.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:1-7

- ¹**Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity,
And I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.**
- ²**Examine me, O LORD, and try me;
Test my mind and my heart.**
- ³**For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes,
And I have walked in Your truth.**
- ⁴**I do not sit with deceitful men,
Nor will I go with pretenders.**
- ⁵**I hate the assembly of evildoers,
And I will not sit with the wicked.**
- ⁶**I shall wash my hands in innocence,**

**And I will go about Your altar, O LORD,
⁷That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving
 And declare all Your wonders.**

26:1-7 This strophe asserts the psalmist's desire to be vindicated by YHWH. He has been accused of some evil, possibly idolatry.

1. vindicate – BDB 1047, KB1022, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 7:8; 17:2-3; 35:24; 43:1; YHWH tests His people, cf. Jer. 11:20; 12:3; 20:12; see Special Topic at Ps. 11:4b
2. examine me – BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 139:23
3. test my mind – BDB 650, KB 707, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 7:9; the mind (lit. “kidneys”) and heart were idioms for the whole person (i.e., thoughts, motives, actions)

The author then lists the reasons why he should be vindicated.

1. I have walked in my integrity – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 26:3b and 26:11a; Job 4:6; Ps. 7:8; 25:21; 41:12; 78:72; 101:2; Pro. 2:7; 19:1; 20:7; 28:6
2. I have trusted in YHWH without wavering – notice the two VERBS.
 - a. trusted – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 13:5; 52:8; this is a settled condition
 - b. without wavering – BDB 588, KB 609, *Qal* IMPERFECT which is an ongoing need (cf. Heb. 10:23); similar imagery occurs in Ps. 5:8 and 18:36
3. I have walked in Your truth – BDB 229, KB 246, *Hithpael* PERFECT with *waw*; truth here means faithfulness, not creedal
4. I do not sit with deceitful men – BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 1:1 (this may refer to idolatry, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 54)
5. I do not go with pretenders – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT
6. I hate the assembly of evil doers – BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 31:6; 139:21
7. I will not sit with the wicked – BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* IMPERFECT
8. I will wash my hands in innocence – BDB 934, KB 1220, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 73:13; Numbers 8 and 9 are ritual acts performed in national worship events (cf. Deut. 21:6)
9. I will go about Your altar – BDB 685, KB 738, *Poel* COHORTATIVE, this refers to some kind of ritual dance or march, cf. Jos. 6:3-15; Ps. 43:3-4; 48:12
10. I will proclaim all Your wonders (see Special Topic at Ps. 9:1)
 - a. singing aloud – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
 - b. proclaim – BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. Ps. 9:1; 40:5; 75:1

Notice the variations between PERFECTS and IMPERFECTS. Remember time is not part of Hebrew VERBS, just completed or ongoing action.

☐ Notice how the opponents of faithful followers are characterized.

1. deceitful men (i.e., idolators, worthless, BDB 996, see Special Topic at Ps. 24:4)
2. pretenders (i.e., hypocrites, BDB 761, KB 824, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE)
3. the assembly of evil doers (BDB 949, KB 1269, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE)
4. wicked (BDB 957)

Also, all the psalmist's positive actions could be understood as not performed by his opponents. He is innocent and asks for vindication. They are guilty and deserve condemnation.

The list of descriptive terms for his opponents (cf. Ps. 1:5; 5:10; 15:2-5) is expanded in the next strophe.

5. sinners (BDB 308)
6. men of bloodshed (BDB 60 CONSTRUCT BDB 196, cf. Ps. 5:6; 55:23; 139:19)
7. wicked schemers (BDB 273, cf. Ps. 37:7), AB suggests this refers to idols (p. 163)
8. offer bribes (BDB 1005), cf. Exod. 23:8; Deut. 16:19; Ps. 15:5

One wonders who these people are. Are they covenant people who live faithless lives or non-covenant people with no light? God help us, they seem to be people who had light, truth, and revelation but chose to reject it!

26:3 “lovingkindness” See Special Topic at Ps. 5:7.

26:5 “the assembly of evildoers” The word “assembly” (*qahal*, BDB 874) is the OT background to the NT designation of the church, *ekklesia* (lit. “the called out ones,” i.e., the church) used in the LXX to translate *qahal*.

The idea is that there are two kinds of assemblies (cf. Matt. 7:13-14)

1. the faithful people of God – Ps. 22:22,25; 35:18; 40:9,10; 89:5; 107:32; 149:1
2. the evildoers (i.e., idolaters, cf. Ps. 31:6)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:8-12

⁸O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house

And the place where Your glory dwells.

⁹Do not take my soul away *along* with sinners,

Nor my life with men of bloodshed,

¹⁰In whose hands is a wicked scheme,

And whose right hand is full of bribes.

¹¹But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity;

Redeem me, and be gracious to me.

¹²My foot stands on a level place;

In the congregations I shall bless the LORD.

26:8-12 This strophe parallels the thoughts of vv. 1-7. The psalmist again lists his qualification for acceptance and his opponents’ actions/motives for rejection.

The psalmist’s qualifications:

1. I love the temple – BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* PERFECT
2. I walk in integrity – BDB 1070, cf. 26:1
3. my foot stands on a level place (cf. Ps. 27:11). This is imagery for the clear path, the level way of YHWH’s covenant, cf. Ps. 119:105

The psalmist asks God to act toward him differently than the way He acts toward the wicked.

1. Do not take my soul away along with sinners (i.e., “gather,” BDB 62, KB 74, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. This VERB is used literally of “harvest” (cf. Isa. 62:9). It came to be used of death (cf. Jdgs. 2:10; 2 Kgs. 22:20; 2 Chr. 34:28).
2. Do not take my life with men of bloodshed

These people are characterized by bloodshed, wicked schemes, and bribery. There is a clear obvious lifestyle difference between the faithful follower and the faithless Israelite who performs the acts of worship and participates in the ritual but there is no lifestyle effect (cf. Matt. 7:15-27)!

SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY (*APHISTĒMI*)

This Greek term *aphistēmi* has a wide semantic field. However, the English term “apostasy” is derived from this term and prejudices its usage to modern readers. Context, as always, is the key, not a preset definition.

This is a compound term from the preposition *apo*, which means “from” or “away from” and *histēmi*, “to sit,” “to stand,” or “to fix.” Notice the following (non-theological) usages:

1. to remove physically
 - a. from the Temple, Luke 2:37
 - b. from a house, Mark 13:34
 - c. from a person, Mark 12:12; 14:50; Acts 5:38
 - d. from all things, Matt. 19:27,29
2. to remove politically, Acts 5:37
3. to remove relationally, Acts 5:38; 15:38; 19:9; 22:29
4. to remove legally (divorce), Deut. 24:1,3 (LXX) and NT, Matt. 5:31; 19:7; Mark 10:4; 1 Cor. 7:11
5. to remove a debt, Matt. 18:24
6. to show unconcern by leaving, Matt. 4:20; 22:27; John 4:28; 16:32
7. to show concern by not leaving, John 8:29; 14:18
8. to allow or permit, Matt. 13:30; 19:14; Mark 14:6; Luke 13:8

In a theological sense the VERB also has a wide usage:

1. to cancel, pardon, remit the guilt of sin, Exod.32:32 (LXX); Num. 14:19; Job 42:10, and NT, Matt. 6:12,14-15; Mark 11:25-26
2. to refrain from sin, 2 Tim. 2:19
3. to neglect by moving away from
 - a. the Law, Matt. 23:23; Acts 21:21
 - b. the faith, Ezek. 20:8 (LXX); Luke 8:13; 2 Thess. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 2:13

Modern believers ask many theological questions that the NT writers would have never thought about. One of these would relate to the modern tendency to separate faith from faithfulness.

There are persons in the Bible who are involved in the people of God and something happens.

I. Old Testament

- A. Those who heard the twelve (ten) spies’ report, Numbers 14 (cf. Heb. 3:16-19)
- B. Korah, Numbers 16
- C. Eli’s sons, 1 Samuel 2, 4
- D. Saul, 1 Samuel 11-31
- E. False prophets (examples)
 1. Deut. 13:1-5; 18:19-22 (ways to know a false prophet)
 2. Jeremiah 28
 3. Ezekiel 13:1-7
- F. False prophetesses
 1. Ezekiel 13:17
 2. Nehemiah 6:14
- G. Evil leaders of Israel (examples)
 1. Jeremiah 5:30-31; 8:1-2; 23:1-4
 2. Ezekiel 22:23-31
 3. Micah 3:5-12

II. New Testament

- A. This Greek term is literally *apostasize*. The Old and New Testaments both confirm an intensification of evil and false teaching before the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29,30; 2 Thess. 2:9-12; 2 Tim. 4:4). This Greek term may reflect Jesus' words in the Parable of the Soils found in Matthew 13; Mark 4; and Luke 8. These false teachers are obviously not Christians, but they came from within (cf. Acts 20:29-30; 1 John 2:19); however, they are able to seduce and capture immature believers (cf. Heb. 3:12).

The theological question is were the false teachers ever believers? This is difficult to answer because there were false teachers in the local churches (cf. 1 John 2:18-19). Often our theological or denominational traditions answer this question without reference to specific Bible texts (except the proof-text method of quoting a verse out of context to supposedly prove one's bias).

B. Apparent faith

1. Judas, John 17:12
2. Simon Magnus, Acts 8
3. Those spoken of in Matt. 7:13-23
4. Those spoken of in Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8
5. The Jews of John 8:31-59
6. Alexander and Hymenaeus, 1 Tim. 1:19-20
7. Those of 1 Tim. 6:21
8. Hymenaeus and Philetus, 2 Tim. 2:16-18
9. Demas, 2 Tim. 4:10
10. False teachers, 2 Peter 2:19-22; Jude vv. 12-19
11. antichrists, 1 John 2:18-19

C. Fruitless faith

1. 1 Corinthians 3:10-15
2. 2 Peter 1:8-11

We rarely think about these texts because our systematic theology (Calvinism, Arminianism, etc.) dictates the mandated response. Please do not pre-judge me because I bring up this subject. My concern is proper hermeneutical procedure. We must let the Bible speak to us and not try to mold it into a preset theology. This is often painful and shocking because much of our theology is denominational, cultural or relational (parent, friend, pastor), not biblical. Some who are in the People of God turn out to not be in the People of God (e.g., Rom. 9:6).

26:8 This imagery refers to the tabernacle of the wilderness (cf. Exodus 25-31, 36-40), but later came to refer to the temple in Jerusalem on Mt. Moriah. It was where YHWH dwelt among humans (i.e., between the wings of the *Cherubim* above the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies). Faithful followers longed to be in YHWH's presence (cf. Ps. 23:6; 27:4-5).

Verse 6 also refers to the tabernacle/temple (cf. Ps. 24:3-4).

26:11 Even though the psalmist believes he is innocent, he knows that YHWH is pure and holy and all humans are not (cf. Isa. 53:6; Rom. 1:18-3:18). The closer one comes into YHWH's fellowship the more the awareness of personal sin (i.e., omission and commission) becomes a reality. Psalm 19:11-14 expresses this truth well.

26:11b Because of these things he asks YHWH to

1. redeem him – BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, see Special Topic at Ps. 19:14
2. be gracious to him – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 25:16

He believes YHWH will vindicate him so he will bless YHWH

1. with songs, Ps. 26:7
2. with testimony, 26:7
3. with blessing, 26:12 (BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERFECT)

26:12 “congregations” The MT is PLURAL but it may be an example of the PLURAL OF MAJESTY. The NRSV, TEV, REB have the SINGULAR. The NET Bible makes the PLURAL refer to the “worshippers” (cf. Knox Translation). The PLURAL form appears only here and Ps. 68:26.

▣ **“I shall bless the LORD”** This refers to public affirmation of one’s faith, trust, hope, and allegiance to YHWH (cf. Rom. 10:9-13), probably in a worship setting.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How does YHWH test the mind and heart?
2. Does verse 6 imply a priest is the author?
3. Define the word “wonders” (v. 7).
4. Explain verse 12a in your own words.

PSALM 27

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Psalm of Fearless Trust in God	An Exuberant Declaration of Faith	An Act of Devotion and a Prayer for Deliverance (Song of Trust)	A Prayer Of Praise	In God's Company There Is No Fear
<u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.				
27:1-3	27:1-3	27:1	27:1	27:1
		27:2	27:2-3	27:2
		27:3		27:3
27:4-6	27:4-5	27:4	27:4-6	27:4
		27:5		27:5
	27:6	27:6		27:6
				27:6c
27:7-10	27:7-10	27:7-9a	27:7-9a	27:7-9a
		27:9b-10	27:9b-10	27:9b-10
27:11-14	27:11-13	27:11-12	27:11-12	27:11-12
		27:13-14	27:13-14	27:13-14
	27:14			

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The theme from Psalm 26:8,12; Ps. 27:4; and Ps. 28:2 on being in God's house (i.e., tabernacle or temple) may be why these Psalms are placed together. In a sense Psalm 27 continues and fulfills the "trust in the LORD without wavering" theme of Ps. 26:1.
- B. This psalm has such beautiful parallelism.
- C. No one knows for sure the procedural criteria nor the person(s) involved in structuring the Psalter as we know it (and for that matter, the whole OT). It is a faith presupposition that the Spirit guided the editorial and collection process, as He did the writing of Scripture.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:1-3

¹The LORD is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the defense of my life;
Whom shall I dread?
²When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh,
My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.
³Though a host encamp against me,
My heart will not fear;
Though war arise against me,
In *spite of* this I shall be confident.

27:1-3 This psalm characterizes what YHWH is to the psalmist.

- 1. light – BDB 21, i.e., this could refer to:
 - a. instruction – Pro. 6:23
 - b. guide – Ps. 43:3
 - c. YHWH's presence – Ps. 4:6; 44:3; 89:15
 - d. life and vitality – Job 33:28; Ps. 36:10; Micah 7:8, see *UBS Handbook* p. 261The concept of "light" was a powerful image in the ancient world. Darkness was to be feared but light was a blessing. The imagery of God as light had several connotations (cf. Isa. 60:1,19-20; Micah 7:8; and John 8:12).
- 2. salvation – BDB 447, this could refer to
 - a. safety – Ps. 12:6; Job 5:4,11
 - b. rescue – Ps. 50:23; 69:14; 85:7,9
 - c. rock of. . . – Ps. 95:1
 - d. horn of. . . – Ps. 18:3
- 3. refuge – BDB 731 (i.e., place of safety, cf. Ps. 28:8; 31:2-3; 37:39-40; 2 Sam. 22:31-32)

There is no "to be" VERB in verse 1, lines 1 and 3. The other VERBS are IMPERFECTS (like v. 3) which speak of ongoing action. Note the contrast with the state of the evildoers/adversaries/enemies in verse 2. Their status (PERFECTS) is set. They have stumbled and are fallen. The IMPERFECT VERBS continue in verse 3. Life has its trials, problems, incidents, but God is always with us and for us!

What are faithful followers to do in light of the experiences of life in a fallen world?

- 1. fear not, vv. 1,3 (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECTS)

2. dread not, v. 1 (BDB 808, KB 922, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 118:6; Rom. 8:31)
3. be confident, v. 3 (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE)

True faith is a personal relationship with God, a new worldview, a new lifestyle (cf. Rom. 8:31-39)! All of this is possible because of the character and revelation of God. He is with and for us and wants to have a daily personal relationship with us, even in a fallen world with sinful people!!

27:2 Notice the different words used to describe the opponents.

1. evildoers, v. 2 – BDB 949, KB 1269, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE
2. adversaries, vv. 2,12 – BDB 865 III
3. enemies, vv. 2,6 – BDB 33, KB 38, *Qal* PARTICIPLE

They are said to have “stumbled” and “fell” (cf. Jer. 50:32). Both are *Qal* PERFECTS. Their fate and judgment are viewed as already having occurred! Their doom is sure!

▣ **“to devour my flesh”** The TEV has “kill me” and this is the thrust of the idiom (cf. Ps. 14:4). It may imply the evildoers act like wild carnivores!

The RSV thinks it means “to slander” (i.e., “backbiting,” based on Dan. 3:8), but the NRSV uses a more literal translation.

27:3 This verse strongly implies that the psalmist is a king. The context of Psalm 1-41 suggests it is David.

Note the word play between “host” (הֹנֵחַ, BDB 334) and “encamp” (הִנַּחַת, BDB 333). These kinds of sound plays occur often in Hebrew poetry.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:4-6

⁴One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek:

That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,

To behold the beauty of the LORD

And to meditate in His temple.

⁵For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle;

In the secret place of His tent He will hide me;

He will lift me up on a rock.

⁶And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me,

And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;

I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

27:4-6 The psalmist lists a series of prayer requests. Notice the parallel of PERFECT and IMPERFECT VERBS.

1. “I have asked” – BDB 981, K 1371, *Qal* PERFECT denotes a completed act
 2. “I shall seek” – BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* IMPERFECT denotes an intense continuing prayer life
- In interpreting the psalms we must remember that these requests serve two functions.
1. they reflect the heart and mind (i.e., new worldview, cf. Ezek. 36:22-38) of a faithful follower
 2. they contrast and clearly reveal the heart and mind of false followers

Those who oppose God’s leaders oppose God! It is not vengeance that is sought, but justice and the revelation of YHWH’s character!

27:4 Note the fervent requests.

1. I may dwell (*Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) in the house of the LORD all the days of my life (cf. Ps. 23:6)

2. I may behold (*Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, often used of prophet's visions, BDB 302) the beauty (see note below) of the LORD
3. I may meditate (*Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) in His temple



NASB, NKJV,
NRSV, JPSOA,
REB
NASB Margin
LXX
TEV
NJB

“beauty”
“delightfulness”
“pleasantness”
“goodness”
“sweetness”

The Hebrew word (BDB 653) basically means “pleasant,” “delightful.” The NOUN is used mostly in Proverbs and describes several different things. In the context of the temple it may denote a vision of God or the afterlife. It may be parallel to “goodness” (BDB 375) in verse 13, which also denotes a perfect setting with God.

Here is a sample of the use of this term in Proverbs.

1. NOUN – Pro. 3:17; 15:26; 16:21
2. ADJECTIVE – Pro. 22:18; 23:8; 24:4
3. VERB – Pro. 2:10; 9:17; 24:25

27:5 The results of his prayers are:

1. YHWH will conceal (BDB 860, KB 1049, *Qal* IMPERFECT) him in His tabernacle (cf. Ps. 76:2) in his day of trouble.
2. YHWH will hide (BDB 711, KB 771, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) him in the secret place of His tent.
3. YHWH will lift him up (BDB 926, KB 1202, *Polel* IMPERFECT) upon a rock (i.e., YHWH Himself).

▣ I wonder if the Jews of old quoted this verse just before

1. the temple fell to Babylon, Egypt, Neo-Babylon
2. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) violated the temple
3. the Romans invaded the temple under Titus (A.D. 70)

We must remember that biblical promises have effect only

1. to faithful followers
2. in light of God's larger purposes in history

27:6 Because YHWH has responded in such wonderful ways to the psalmist's prayers (i.e., “my head will be lifted up above my enemies”)

1. he will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy (lit. “sacrifices of shouts of joy”; verses such as this imply a verbal sacrifice was used by Jews following the destruction of their temple to simulate the annual sacrifices no longer possible)
2. he will sing praises to YHWH

There are three COHORTATIVE VERBS in this verse. The psalmist believes he will be in YHWH's presence (i.e., the temple).

1. I will offer a sacrifice – BDB 256, KB 261, *Qal*
2. I will sing – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal*
3. I will sing praises – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel*

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:7-10

⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice,
And be gracious to me and answer me.

⁸*When You said, “Seek My face,”* my heart said to You,
“Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.”

⁹Do not hide Your face from me,
Do not turn Your servant away in anger;
You have been my help;
Do not abandon me nor forsake me,
O God of my salvation!

¹⁰For my father and my mother have forsaken me,
But the LORD will take me up.

27:7-10 Often in the Psalms separate strophes repeat the emphasis or theme of previous strophes. This could be explained as

1. another level of purposeful parallelism
2. the editorial process whereby
 - a. words
 - b. themes
 - c. moods
 - d. actions

which are similar in sound, meaning, or theology are grouped together by later editors/compilers.

27:7 “Hear. . .cry” The first is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 1033, KB 1570), so common in the Psalms as a way of beseeching God. The second VERB, “cry” (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERFECT), also denotes prayer. This verse repeats the focus of verse 4.

The context of the prayer request is

1. be gracious to me – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. answer me – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

27:8 Notice that NASB and NKJV have an introductory phrase in italics (i.e., “When You said”), which denotes that it is not part of the Hebrew text. The NRSV and NJB translations assume the speaker is the psalmist.

The VERB “seek” (BDB 134, KB 152) is repeated

1. first an opening *Qal* IMPERATIVE (PLURAL)
2. second a *Piel* IMPERFECT (SINGULAR, the opening VERB of v. 8 is also SINGULAR)

These seem to represent a dialogue between YHWH and the psalmist. One calls and the other appropriately responds. The VERB “seek” denotes a call to a personal relationship (cf. Ps. 24:6; Deut. 4:29), which denotes worship and obedience. In this Psalm, because of the emphasis on prayer, it may parallel vv. 4 and 7.

▣ **“face”** This is a Hebrew idiom for close personal contact (cf. Ps. 24:6), where both “seek” and “face” occur together.

27:9 There is a series of JUSSIVE VERBS which denote the things the psalmist asks YHWH not to do.

1. do not hide Your face from me – BDB 711, KB 771, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE, cf. Ps. 69:17; 102:2; 143:7
2. do not turn away Your servant in anger – BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE

3. do not abandon me – BDB 643, KB 693, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 94:14, unless they cease to be faithful followers (cf. Jer. 12:7)
4. do not forsake me – BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

Notice the personal element involved in all these requests!

27:10

NASB	“for”
NKJV	“when”
NRSV	“if”
TEV	“may”
NJB, JPSOA,	
REB	“though”
NET Bible	“even if”

The introductory CONJUNCTION (BDB 471-475) has a wide semantical field. Only context can determine meaning. Obviously this context does not allow a clear translation.

▣ **“my father and my mother forsake me”** This is the same VERB which was used in 27:9. Even though the translation of this phrase is uncertain, the meaning is obvious. One’s closest human companions or family may leave but the covenant God will never leave (cf. Deut. 31:6; Jos. 1:5; Isa. 49:15; Heb. 13:5)!

The UBS *Handbook* (p. 266) mentions that TEV, NEB, JB take the verse as expressing a theoretical possibility to make a strong literary point, not a real abandonment.

One wonders if this may reflect YHWH’s promise to David and his descendants in 2 Samuel 7. Possibly verse 13 relates to 2 Sam. 7:28.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:11-14

- ¹¹**Teach me Your way, O LORD,
And lead me in a level path
Because of my foes.**
- ¹²**Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries,
For false witnesses have risen against me,
And such as breathe out violence.**
- ¹³***I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.***
- ¹⁴**Wait for the LORD;
Be strong and let your heart take courage;
Yes, wait for the LORD.**

27:11-14 This strophe starts out with more prayer requests (v. 11-12), moves to a testimony of faith (v. 13), and concludes with good advice (v. 14).

27:11-12 The prayer requests are

1. teach me Your way – BDB 434, KB 436, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 25:4-5; 86:11
2. lead me in a level path – BDB 634, KB 685, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Deut. 5:32-33; 31:29; Ps. 5:8; 26:12; 139:24; this is the OT background for the church being called “The Way,” cf. Acts 9:2; 18:25; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; John 14:6
3. do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

The psalmist gives two reasons for his prayers in this strophe.

1. because of my foes (lit. “those who lie in wait for me”), v. 11
2. for false witnesses have risen against me, v. 12

27:13 This verse expresses the psalmist’s faith (“believed” – BDB 52, KB 63, *Hiphil* PERFECT) and worldview. He believed there was

1. justice in this life because of the character of YHWH
2. a future life with YHWH in the land of the living (cf. Job 14:7-12,13-14; 19:25-27; Ps. 16:10; 49:15; 73:24; 116:8-9; 142:5; Isa. 25:8; 26:19; 38:11)

27:14 In light of the psalmist’s faith and worldview he admonishes others to

1. wait for the LORD – BDB 875, KB 1082, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 25:3; 37:34; 40:1; 62:1,5; 130:5; Pro. 20:22; Isa. 8:17; 25:9; 33:2
2. be strong – BDB 304, KB 302, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 31:24
3. let your heart take courage – BDB 54, KB 65, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE
4. wait for the LORD – BDB same as #1

Some scholars (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 439) see verse 14 as

1. self-admonition (the psalmist)
2. a priestly oracle given at the temple

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is “fear” the key word in the first strophe?
2. Verse 2 and Psalm 23:6 sound similar, what does this imagery imply?
3. Are verses 4-6 about the tabernacle or the temple?
4. Why is verse 9 so troubling? Does the covenant God abandon His followers?
5. What does verse 10 mean? Is it literal or figurative?

PSALM 28

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Prayer for Help, and Praise For Its Answer	Rejoicing in Answered Prayer	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer For Help	Petition and Thanksgiving
<u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.				
28:1-5	28:1-2	28:1-2	28:1-3	28:1
				28:2
	28:3-5	28:3-5		28:3
			28:4-5	28:4
				28:5
28:6-9	28:6-7	28:6-7	28:6-7	28:6
				28:7
	28:8-9	28:8-9	28:8-9	28:8-9

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:1-5

¹To You, O LORD, I call;
My rock, do not be deaf to me,
For if You are silent to me,
I will become like those who go down to the pit.

**²Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You for help,
When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.**

**³Do not drag me away with the wicked
And with those who work iniquity,
Who speak peace with their neighbors,
While evil is in their hearts.**

**⁴Requite them according to their work and according to the evil of their practices;
Requite them according to the deeds of their hands;
Repay them their recompense.**

**⁵Because they do not regard the works of the LORD
Nor the deeds of His hands,
He will tear them down and not build them up.**

28:1-5 There is some disagreement of how to divide the strophes in this Psalm (look at front page of this chapter). NASB has vv. 1-5, 6-9, so I will use it. The first strophe is a lament and the second a psalm of thanksgiving.

The psalmist prays for

1. YHWH to hear him when he prays
2. YHWH not to drag him away like the wicked

In verse 4 he uses three IMPERATIVES to describe what God should do to the wicked.

1. give them (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) according to their deeds (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12)
2. give them according to their evil practices (VERB assumed from #1)
3. give them (same VERB as #1) according to their actions (lit. “work of their hands”)
4. reward (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) them dire reward (lit. “dealings,” BDB 168)

28:1 “My rock” This imagery speaks of permanence, strength, stability, protection (see full note at Ps. 18:2).

▣ **“do not. . .”** These are two IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense.

1. hear – do not be deaf, BDB 361 II, cf. Ps. 35:22; 39:12; 83:1; 109:1 (parallel to “silent,” BDB 364)
2. v. 2 – do not drag me away, BDB 604 (i.e., possibly like an animal or a prisoner of war)

▣ **“the pit”** The term (BDB 92, cf. Ps. 88:4; 143:7; Pro. 28:17) is a synonym for *Sheol*. See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Ps. 1:5. It probably related to

1. a dug grave (cf. Isa. 14:9; Ezek. 32:25)
2. a hole in the hill for burial
3. an opening which goes into *Sheol* (cf. Ps. 30:4; Pro. 1:12; Isa. 14:15; 38:18; Ezek. 26:20)

28:2 “When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary” This gesture has several connotations.

1. an act of blessing after a sacrifice by a priest – Lev. 9:22 (i.e., some sacrifices were lifted up to YHWH)
2. an act on the part of a worshiper after a sacrifice of incense – Ps. 141:2
3. a gesture toward the sanctuary – Ps. 134:2

4. a posture of prayer, hands raised, cf. Exod. 9:29 (Moses); 1 Kgs. 8:22 (Solomon); Lam. 2:19; 3:41 (Israel); Luke 24:50 (Jesus); 1 Tim. 2:8 (believers)
5. a posture for praise, adoration, or public confession – Ps. 63:4
6. a way to show YHWH's power as His staff was lifted up in Moses' hands (cf. Exod. 17:8-12)

Here it is meant to symbolize a clean life (cf. 1 Tim. 2:8), open to God and a life that recognizes its need to receive from God (see negative usage in Ps. 44:20).



NASB	“toward Your holy sanctuary”
NASB margin,	
NRSV footnote	“the innermost place”
NJB	“Holy of Holies”
JPSOA	“inner sanctuary”
LXX	“court”
REB	“shrine”

This Hebrew term (BDB 184 I) basically means “back part,” “innermost.” In 1 Kings 6:16,19,20,21, 22,23,31; 7:49; 8:6,8 it refers to the Holy of Holies (cf. Exod. 26:31-35), where the ark of the covenant stood between Solomon's giant *cherubim*.

Faithful followers in the Old Covenant faced the temple (cf. 1 Kings 8, Solomon's great prayer at the dedication of the Temple) when they prayed because it was there that YHWH dwelt between the wings of the *cherubim*. It was where heaven and earth met. The ark of the covenant was YHWH's footstool.

However, in the New Covenant, God is present in all places (cf. John 4:20-24). The new temple is Jesus (cf. John 2:19,21)!

28:3,5 “Because. . .” Verses 3 and 5 list the activities and attitudes of the wicked (i.e., practical atheists).

1. who work iniquity, v. 3
2. who speak peace to their neighbor but have evil in their hearts (see Special Topic at Ps. 4:7)
3. who do not regard the works of God, v. 5 (God's people must “regard” who He is by what He has done, cf. Deut. 32:7; Ps. 107:43; Jer. 2:10; Hos. 14:9)
4. who do not regard the deeds of God (parallel), v. 5, cf. Isa. 5:12

28:5 The last line of verse 5 tells what God will do to them (compare Jer. 1:10).

1. tear them down – BDB 248, KB 256, *Qal* IMPERFECT, v. 5
2. not build them up – BDB 124, KB 139, *Qal* IMPERFECT, negated, v. 5

The three IMPERFECTS of verse 5 denote the continuous actions of the wicked. Their lives are characterized by ignoring God and hurting others, therefore, God's judgments are also ongoing (i.e., perennial destruction, cf. Isa. 6:9-10; Jer. 1:10).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:6-9

**⁶Blessed be the LORD,
Because He has heard the voice of my supplication.**

**⁷The LORD is my strength and my shield;
My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart exults,
And with my song I shall thank Him.**

**⁸The LORD is their strength,
And He is a saving defense to His anointed.**

**Save Your people and bless Your inheritance;
Be their shepherd also, and carry them forever.**

28:6-9 A radical mood swing occurs at verse 6. This strophe spells out the reasons why YHWH is to be blessed (v. 6a).

1. He hears his prayer
2. He is both his strength and shield
3. He is his refuge

In verses 8 and 9 the focus changes from the King (i.e., “His anointed”) to His covenant people. As YHWH saved the King, may he now save His people! This fluidity between the SINGULAR and PLURAL is common in the Psalms.

▣ **“Blessed be the LORD”** This is a recurrent theme in the Psalms. He is blessed by His faithful followers for many reasons, but all of them come back to who He is and what He has done! This phrase became a liturgical formula (cf. Ps. 18:46; 28:6; 31:21; 41:13; 66:20; 68:35; 72:18; 89:52; 106:48; 119:12; 124:6; 135:21; 144:1). Let all that has breath praise the Lord!

28:7 As verses 3 and 5 describe the wicked, verse 7 describes the faithful follower.

1. his heart trusts in Him – BDB 105, KB 1200, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 112:7 (note the theological connection between human’s trust and divine deliverance/salvation, cf. Ps. 22:4-5; 25:1-3; 28:7; 31:14-15; 86:2; see note at NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 646)
2. he is helped by God – BDB 740, KB 810, *Niphal* PERFECT
3. his heart exults – BDB 759, KB 831, *Qal* IMPERFECT with *waw*
4. he thanks Him with song – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT (continual praise)

Just a brief comment about the MT verses the LXX. There was probably a more ancient Hebrew text behind both of them. There are MSS in the DSS that follow the MT and others follow the LXX. The early church used the LXX almost exclusively. Verse 7 is a good example of their translating a different Hebrew text. The LXX has (see note in AB, p. 173)

“The Lord is my helper and my protector; in him my heart hoped,
And I was helped and my flesh revived, and from my will I shall acknowledge him.”

▣ **“shield”** See note at Ps. 3:3.

28:8 “their” The UBS Text Project gives “to His people” a “C” rating (i.e., considerable doubt).

1. to them – לָמוֹ (NKJV, JPSOA)
2. to His people – לְעַמּוֹ (NRSV, TEV, NJB, REB)

The Septuagint uses #2, as do some Hebrew manuscripts. Apparently one Hebrew letter has fallen out of the MT.

▣ **“His anointed”** See Special Topic: Messiah at Ps. 2:2. See similar usage in Ps. 18:50.

28:9 There is a series of IMPERATIVES directed in prayer to YHWH, beseeching Him to act on behalf of the covenant people.

1. save – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 106:47
2. bless – BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. shepherd – BDB 944, KB 1258, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (The NASB Study Bible [p. 765] makes the comment that “shepherd” links up with Psalm 23 and probably marks off Psalm 23-28 as a collection of psalms linked by several common themes)

4. carry (i.e., “lift up”), *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Isa. 40:11; 63:9

Several Psalms close with a corporate focus (i.e., Ps. 3:8; 15:7; 25:22; 29:11; 51:18-19; 130:8).

▣ **“Your inheritance”** YHWH gave a land allotment to all the nations (cf. Deut. 32:9), but the descendants of Abraham were His special people (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; 1 Kgs. 8:51; Ps. 33:12). He showed this by His promised exodus out of Egypt (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). He displayed His power and love (cf. Deut. 9:29). Moses beseeched YHWH not to judge His sinful people because the pagan nations would not understand (cf. Deut. 9:26-29). His people were meant to reveal His character to all nations (see Special Topic at the Intro. to Psalm 2). But if they continued in sin and idolatry there was rejection (cf. Ps. 106:40; Ezek. 36:22-23).

▣ **“forever”** See Special Topic: Forever at Psalm 9:5.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the OT view of death?
2. Is verse 4 the same truth as Gal. 6:7?
3. Is verse 5c related to Isa. 6:9-10 or Jer. 1:10?
4. Why do psalms that reflect an individual’s thoughts and situation end in communal IMPERATIVES?

PSALM 29

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Voice of the LORD in the Storm <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.	Praise to God in His Holiness and Majesty	Hymn to the God of the Storm	The Voice of the LORD in the Storm	Hymn to the LORD of the Storm
29:1-2	29:1-2	29:1-2	29:1-2	29:1-2
29:3-9	29:3-4	29:3-4	29:3-4	29:3-4
	29:5-7	29:5-6	29:5-6	29:5-6
		29:7-8	29:7-9	29:7-9b
	29:8-9			
		29:9		29:9c-11
29:10-11	29:10-11	29:10-11	29:10-11	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is a psalm about natural revelation (i.e., God reveals Himself to everyone through creation).
 1. Psalm 19:1-6 (silent voice in creation)
 2. Romans 1:19-23 (knowledge of God from nature)
 3. Romans 2:14-16 (inner moral witness)
- B. The imagery of the psalm occurs to encompass
 1. YHWH's defeat of the chaos of initial creation (i.e., water, cf. 29:3,10, the term "flood" [BDB 550] occurs only here and Genesis, chapters 6-11)
 2. YHWH's power in a storm (cf. 29:3-9; cf. Ps. 18:7,15)

- C. YHWH, not *Ba'al*, defeats, controls, and sends water. Many scholars note the numerous similarities to Ugaritic mythology and other ANE literature.
- D. The UBS *Handbook* asserts that this psalm is a chiasm (p. 275).
1. fourfold use of YHWH in verses 1-2 and 10-11
 2. “strength” (BDB 738) in vv. 1 and 11
 3. waters referred to in vv. 3 and 10
 4. YHWH’s majesty referred to in vv. 4 and 10
 5. trees mentioned in vv. 5 and 9
 6. geographical places in vv. 6 and 8
- My problem with this is that a chiasm usually places the most significant theological statement at the middle but verse 7 does not fit this pattern.
- E. This Psalm may refer to
1. a theophany as YHWH is depicted as coming in the imagery of a violent storm
 2. but the thrust is a military victory (cf. v. 11)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:1-2

- ¹**Ascribe to the LORD, O sons of the mighty,
Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.**
- ²**Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His name;
Worship the LORD in holy array.**

29:1-2 “Ascribe” This VERB (BDB 396, KB 393, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is repeated three times. It basically means “give glory to God (cf. Deut. 32:3). This same pattern is also in Psalm 96:7-8 and 1 Chr. 16:28-29. The threefold repetition denotes a superlative emphasis.

29:1

NASB	“sons of the mighty”
NKJV	“you mighty ones”
NRSV, TEV	“heavenly beings”
NJB, LXX	“sons of God”
JPSOA	“divine beings”
REB	“you angelic powers”

The MT has “sons of gods” (lit. “sons of *Elim*,” BDB 119 CONSTRUCT BDB 42). It refers to the angels (cf. Gen. 6:2 [“sons of *elohim*”]; Ps. 103:20-21) or the heavenly angelic council (cf. Exod. 15:11; 2 Kgs. 22:19; Ps. 82:1; 86:6-8).

See Special Topic: The Sons of God below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: “the sons of God” in Genesis 6

- A. There is great controversy over the identification of the phrase “the sons of God.” There have been three major interpretations
1. the phrase refers to the godly line of Seth (cf. Genesis 5)
 2. the phrase refers to a group of angelic beings

3. the phrase refers to the kings or tyrants of Cain's line (cf. Genesis 4)
- B. Evidence for the phrase referring to Seth's line
1. The immediate literary context of Genesis 4 and 5 shows the development of the rebellious line of Cain and the godly line of Seth. Therefore, contextual evidence seems to favor the godly line of Seth.
 2. The rabbis have been divided over their understanding of this passage. Some assert that it refers to Seth (but most to angels).
 3. The phrase, "the sons of God," though most often used for angelic beings, rarely refers to human beings.
 - a. Deut. 14:1, "sons of YHWH your God"
 - b. Deut. 32:5, "His sons"
 - c. Exod. 21:6; 22:8-9, possibly Levitical Judges
 - d. Psalm 73:15, "Thy children"
 - e. Hosea 1:10, "sons of the Living God"
- C. Evidence for the phrase referring to angelic beings
1. This has been the most common traditional understanding of the passage. The larger context of Genesis could support this view as another example of supernatural evil trying to thwart God's will for mankind (the rabbis say out of jealousy).
 2. The phrase ("sons of God") is used overwhelmingly in the OT for angels.
 - a. Job 1:6
 - b. Job 2:1
 - c. Job 38:7
 - d. Psalm 29:1
 - e. Psalm 89:6,7
 - f. Daniel 3:25
 3. The intertestamental book of I Enoch, which was very popular among believers in the NT period, along with the *Genesis Apocryphon* from the Dead Sea Scrolls and *Jubilees* 5:1, interprets these as rebellious angels (I Enoch 12:4; 19:1; 21:1-10).
 4. The immediate context of Genesis 6 seems to imply that "the mighty men who were of old, men of renown" came from this improper mixing of the orders of creation.
 5. I Enoch even asserts that Noah's Flood came to destroy this angelic/human union which was hostile towards YHWH and His plan for creation (cf. I Enoch 7:1ff; 15:1ff; 86:1ff).
- D. Evidence for the phrase referring to kings or tyrants of Cain's line
1. There are several ancient translations that support this view.
 - a. Targum or Onkelos (second century A.D.) translates "sons of God" as "sons of nobles."
 - b. Symmachus' (second century A.D.) Greek translation of the OT, translated "sons of God" as "the sons of the kings."
 - c. The term *elohim* is sometimes used of Israelite leaders (cf. Exod. 21:6; 22:8; Psalm 82:1,6, note NIV and Net Bibles).
 - d. *Nephilim* is linked to *Gibborim* in Gen 6:4. *Gibborim* is plural of *Gibbor* meaning "a mighty man of valor; strength; wealth or power."
 2. This interpretation and its evidence is taken from *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 106-108.

E. Historical evidence of the advocates of both usages

1. the phrase refers to Sethites

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| a. Cyril of Alexander | e. Calvin |
| b. Theodoret | f. Kyle |
| c. Augustine | g. Gleason Archer |
| d. Jerome | h. Watts |

2. the phrase refers to angelic beings

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|---------------|
| a. writers of the Septuagint | f. Tertullian | k. Olford |
| b. Philo | g. Origen | l. Westermann |
| c. Josephus (<i>Antiquities</i> 1.3.1) | h. Luther | m. Wenham |
| d. Justin Martyr | i. Delitzsch | n. NET Bible |
| e. Clement of Alexandria | j. Hengstenberg | |

F. How are the “Nephilim” of Gen. 6:4 related to the “sons of God” and “the daughters of men” of Gen. 6:1-2? Note the three theories:

1. They are the giants that resulted from the union between angels and human women (cf. Num. 13:33).
2. They do not relate at all. They are simply mentioned as being on the earth in the days of the events of Gen. 6:1-2 and also afterwards.
3. R. K. Harrison in *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 557, has the following cryptic quote, “to miss entirely the invaluable anthropological insights into the interrelation of *Homo sapiens* and pre-Adamic species which the passage contains, and which are amenable to those scholars who are equipped to pursue them.”

This implies to me that he sees these two groups as representing differing groups of humanoids. This would imply a later special creation of Adam and Eve, but also an evolutionary development of *Homo erectus*.

G. It is only fair to disclose my own understanding of this controversial text. First, let me remind all of us that the text in Genesis is brief and ambiguous. Moses’ first hearers must have had additional historical insight or Moses used oral or written tradition from the Patriarchal period that he himself did not fully understand. This issue is not a crucial theological subject. We are often curious about things the Scriptures only hint at. It would be very unfortunate to build an elaborate theology out of this and similar fragments of biblical information. If we needed this information God would have provided it in a more clear and complete form. I personally believe it was angels and humans because:

1. the phrase “sons of God” is used consistently, if not exclusively, for angels in the OT
2. the Septuagint (Alexandrian) translates (late first century B.C.) “sons of God” as “angels of God”
3. the pseudepigraphal apocalyptic book of I Enoch (possibly written about 200 B.C.) is very specific that it refers to angels (cf. chapters 6-7)
4. 2 Peter 2 and Jude speak of angels who sinned and did not keep their proper abode. I know that to some this seems to contradict Matt. 22:30, but these specific angels are neither in heaven nor earth, but in a special prison (*Tartarus*).
5. I think that one reason many of the events of Genesis 1-11 are found in other cultures (i.e., similar creation accounts, similar flood accounts, similar accounts of angels taking women)

is because all humans were together and had some knowledge of YHWH during this period, but after the tower of Babel's dispersion this knowledge became corrupted and adapted to a polytheistic model.

A good example of this is Greek mythology where the half human/half superhuman giants called Titans are imprisoned in *Tartarus*, this very name used only once in the Bible (2 Peter 2) for the holding place of the angels that kept not their proper abode. In rabbinical theology Hades was divided into a section for the righteous (paradise) and a section for the wicked (*Tartarus*).

▣ **“glory and strength”** These are two common terms applied to YHWH.

1. glory – BDB 458
2. strength – BDB 738

29:2 “Worship” This is the fourth in a series of four opening IMPERATIVES (lit. “bow down,” BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishpaal* IMPERATIVE). This is what faithful followers do as they come to His temple in holy array. This involves not just clothing but covenant obedience.

▣ **“His name”** This is an idiomatic way of referring to YHWH Himself. See Special Topic: The Name of YHWH at Psalm 5:11-12.



NASB	“in holy array”
NKJV	“in the beauty of holiness”
NRSV, NJB	“in holy splendor”
JPSOA, NASB margin	“majestic in holiness”
REB, NET	“in holy attire”
LXX, Peshitta	“in His holy court”

The ambiguous phrase (BDB 214 CONSTRUCT BDB 871) also appears in three other temple worship contexts (cf. Ps. 96:9; 110:3; 1 Chr. 16:29). The TEV footnote offers three possible ways to translate the phrase.

1. when He (YHWH) appears (from Ugarit root, cf. TEV, i.e., YHWH Himself; this then would be similar to the theophany of Exodus 19-20)
2. garments of worship (Aaron's garments are described in a similar way in Exod. 28:2)
3. in His beautiful temple (seems to reflect LXX)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:3-9

³The voice of the LORD is upon the waters;

The God of glory thunders,

The LORD is over many waters.

⁴The voice of the LORD is powerful,

The voice of the LORD is majestic.

⁵The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;

Yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

⁶He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,

And Sirion like a young wild ox.
⁷The voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire.
⁸The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
The LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
⁹The voice of the LORD makes the deer to calve
And strips the forests bare;
And in His temple everything says, “Glory!”

29:3-9 This strophe is dominated by “the voice of the LORD.” There seem to be two ways to view it.

1. YHWH the creator, cf. vv. 3,10 (cf. Genesis 1; Psalm 93)
2. YHWH the true storm God and giver of rain (cf. vv. 3-9, i.e., in opposition to *Ba'al*’s claims)

Notice the way YHWH’s voice is characterized (vv. 4-9).

1. powerful (BDB 470)
2. majestic (same root in v. 2b, BDB 214)
3. breaks the cedars (VERB, BDB 990, KB 1402 repeated in v. 5)
4. makes Lebanon and Sirion (i.e., Mt. Hermon, cf. Deut. 3:9) jump
5. lightning (cf. Ps. 18:12,14) flames trees
6. makes the wilderness shake (VERB, BDB 296, KB 297, repeated in v. 8)
7. makes deer calve
8. strips forests bare (BDB 362 I)

It is important to remember that the spoken word was a very important and pervasive theological concept to the ancient Hebrews.

1. creation by the spoken word – Genesis 1
2. power of the spoken word of God – Isa. 14:24; 25:1; 45:23; 46:10; 55:11; 59:21; Matt. 24:35
3. the Messiah is called “the Word” in John 1:1-5,14; Rev. 19:13
4. the imagery of the returning Messiah with a two-edged sword for a tongue – Rev. 1:16; 2:12

29:6 “Lebanon. . .Sirion” These are geographical references north of the Promised Land of Canaan. The term “Sirion” for Mt. Hermon is rare (cf. Deut. 3:9). Because of this and the obvious context or “storm” imagery, many modern scholars have seen this Psalm as a reworking of an original hymn to *Ba'al* (Canaanite storm god). The *Ras Shamra* texts are opening much of the veiled imagery of the OT in light of Canaanite mythology. Hebrew authors often took the descriptions of pagan deities and changed them to descriptions and titles of YHWH. They knew He was the one and only true God (see Special Topic: Monotheism at Psalm 2:7).

For a good brief discussion of ancient cosmology see IVP *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pp. 169-174.

29:9a The same VERB (BDB 296, KB 297) translated “shake” in verse 8 (twice) is now used of calving (cf. Job 39:1) and of Sarah giving birth in Isa. 51:2.

If one tries to keep a synonymous parallelism between 29:9b and 29:5b, then he must change “hinds” (MT, UBS Text Project gives it a “B” rating) to “oaks” (cf. TEV, NJB, same consonants, just a change of vowels). This is done to try to continue the possible chiasmic pattern.

The NET Bible (p. 885 #21) suggests an emendation of “forests” to “female mountain goats” in order to maintain the synonymous parallelism between verses 9a and 6. JPSOA has a footnote, “brings ewes to early birth” as an option (BDB 362 II).

29:9c The summary of all this action (i.e., the physical results of a strong thunderstorm) is that in His temple everything says, “Glory!”

YHWH the creator is providing agricultural abundance by rain in its season. The Creator is also the Sustainer! (See a good article on “Providence” in IVP *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pp. 681-683.)

The NJB makes v. 9c the beginning of vv. 10-12.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:10-11

¹⁰The LORD sat *as King* at the flood;

Yes, the LORD sits as King forever.

¹¹The LORD will give strength to His people;

The LORD will bless His people with peace.

29:10 The word “King” is not in line 1 but is in line 2. The flood refers (1) to Genesis 6-9 (cf. Gen. 6:17) or (1) to the original creation (cf. Gen. 1:2).

The concept of YHWH as King goes back to 1 Sam.8:7. It is stated as a theological assertion in Psalm 10:16 and here. The imagery is of YHWH sitting on a throne (cf. Ps. 2:4; 113:5 and the imagery in Isaiah 6) or having a scepter.

▣ **“sat. . .sits as King”** The VERB “sat” or “enthroned (BDB 442, KB 444) forever” is a recurrent theme (cf. Exod. 15:18; Ps. 9:7; 10:16; 29:10; 66:7; 145:13; 146:10; Jer. 10:10; Lam. 5:19).

▣ **“over the flood”** The PREPOSITION implies

1. power and authority over the waters of chaos (LXX)
2. YHWH in heaven is above the upper waters (i.e., rains), above the clouds (cf. Gen. 1:6-7; Ps. 148:4)

The term “flood” (BDB 550) is found only in Genesis and here in Psalm 29:10.

29:11 Because YHWH is King, His people are secure. His promises are secure. His purposes for the future are secure!

Even amidst the “storm” when the powers of nature seem so severe, YHWH’s people are at peace (cf. Matt. 8:23-27; 14:22-33)! Jesus also demonstrated this divine power over the wind and waves!

PSALM 30

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Thanksgiving For Deliverance From Death	The Blessedness of Answered Prayer	Thanksgiving For Healing	A Prayer of Thanksgiving	Thanksgiving After Mortal Danger
<u>MT Intro</u> “A Psalm; A Song at the Dedication of the House.” <i>A Psalm</i> of David.				
30:1-5	30:1-3	30:1-3	30:1-3	30:1-3
	30:4-7	30:4-7	30:4-5	30:4-5
30:6-9			30:6-7	30:6-7
	30:8-10	30:8-10	30:8-10	30:8-9
30:10-12				30:10-12
	30:11-12	30:11-12	30:11-12	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

The introduction, which is in the MT, is not original (i.e., not in DSS psalms). It was obviously added later (cf. Introduction to Psalms 7, 60). I do not accept these introductions as inspired (see Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Difficulties*, p. 243), therefore, I do not comment on them.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:1-5

- ¹I will extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up,
And have not let my enemies rejoice over me.
²O LORD my God,
I cried to You for help, and You healed me.
³O LORD, You have brought up my soul from Sheol;
You have kept me alive, that I would not go down to the pit.
⁴Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones,
And give thanks to His holy name.
⁵For His anger is but for a moment,
His favor is for a lifetime;
Weeping may last for the night,
But a shout of joy *comes* in the morning.

30:1-5 The psalmist extols and praises YHWH for deliverance from death.

30:1 “I will extol” This VERB (BDB 926, KB 1202, *Polel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense) has two primary meanings.

1. to exalt, extol (here of YHWH), cf. Exod. 15:2; Ps. 34:3; 99:5,9; 107:32; 118:28; 145:1; Isa. 25:1
2. to lift up (referring to praise of YHWH), cf. 2 Sam. 22:47; Ps. 18:46; 21:13; 46:10; 57:5,11

This praise is given because YHWH has acted.

1. He lifted up (BDB 194, KB 222, *Piel* PERFECT) the psalmist, v. 1 (this term was used of drawing water from a well and may refer to divine rescue from the pit, cf. 30:4).
2. He did not let the psalmist’s enemies rejoice (BDB 33, KB 38, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), cf. Ps. 25:2; 41:11.
3. He healed him (BDB 750, KB 1272, *Qal* IMPERFECT with *waw*), v. 2.
4. He brought his soul up from *Sheol* (BDB 748, KB 828, *Hiphil* PERFECT), v. 3.
5. He has kept him alive (BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* PERFECT), v. 3.

30:2 “O LORD my God” This is two of the most common designations of Israel’s Deity (see Special Topic: Names for Deity at Ps. 1:1).

1. YHWH – God as Savior, the covenant-making God, cf. Gen. 2:4
2. *Elohim* – God as creator and provider of all life on this planet, cf. Gen. 1:1

Notice how this Psalm starts with this title (v. 2) and ends with this title (v. 12). This is typical of Hebraic literary style (i.e., *inclusio*).

SPECIAL TOPIC: IS HEALING GOD’S PLAN FOR EVERY AGE?

1. Healing was a significant aspect of the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles.
2. It was intended primarily to confirm the radically new message about God and His kingdom.
3. It shows the heart of God for hurting people.
4. God has not changed (Mal. 3:6) and He still acts in love in healing.
5. There are examples where healing did not take place.
 - a. Paul, 2 Cor. 12:7-10

- b. Trophimus, 2 Tim. 4:20
- 6. Sin and sickness were associated in the rabbis and James (cf. John. 9:2; James 5:13-18).
- 7. Healing is not a guarantee of the New Covenant. It is not part of the atonement described in Isaiah 53 and Psalm 103.
- 8. There is true mystery about why some are healed and some are not.
- 9. It is possible that although healing is present in every age, there was a significant increase during Jesus' lifetime; this increase will occur again just before His return.

▣ **“You healed me”** See Special Topic below.

30:3 “Sheol . . . pit” These two terms (synonymous parallelism) refer to the grave or the holding place of the dead. See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Ps. 1:6.

Notice that antithetical parallelism common in this Psalm. It demonstrates, in very real-to-life ways, the “two ways” of Psalm 1.

For a good brief discussion of “pit” see IVP, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, p. 646-647.

30:4

NASB “godly ones”
NKJV “saints”
NRSV “faithful ones”
TEV “faithful people”

This ADJECTIVE (BDB 339) is formed from the NOUN *hesed* (BDB 338), which denoted covenant loyalty (See Special Topic at Ps. 5:7).

- 1. On God's part; He is faithful to His covenant promises.
- 2. On the faithful follower's part; he/she must be obedient and steadfast to their covenant obligations.

It becomes a common title in the Psalms for faithful covenant followers (i.e., Ps. 4:3 and many more). Several translations (TEV, NJB) see 30:4-5 as a separate strophe imploring faithful followers to join in the praise of YHWH (see paragraph divisions on the front page of this Psalm).

In this context they are called to

- 1. sing praise – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
- 2. give thanks – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

▣

NASB, NRSV,
JPSOA “name”
NKJV “remembrance”
TEV “remember”
NJB “unforgettable”

The MT has the NOUN “remembrance” or “memorial” (BDB 271, cf. Hos. 12:5). Here it refers to YHWH's gracious character and powerful acts on behalf of His people (cf. Ps. 6:5; 30:5; 97:12; 102:12; 111:4; 145:7). The Hebrew concept of “name” is here, but not the word. Both occur in parallel in Ps. 135:13 and Isa. 26:8. Also notice the focus on “memorial-name” in Exod. 3:15.

30:5 This verse has captured the wonder of grace to fallen humanity (antithetical parallel). This is a fallen world but YHWH would not allow the broken fellowship of Eden to be permanent. There are consequences

to sin and rebellion but by His grace, mediated through a faithful follower's faith (cf. Eph. 2:8-9), there is forgiveness and restoration (cf. Ps. 103:8-14; Isa. 54:7-8)! The only permanent consequence is unbelief. It is the unpardonable sin (see Special Topics below).

The first two lines of 30:5 have no VERBS. The TENSE structure emphasizes the theological point

“For a moment His anger

For a lifetime His favour!”

The AB (p. 182) suggests that “lifetime” (BDB 213) means “eternal life,” based on Ps. 21:4. However, Ps. 91:16 is the normal OT usage of this word, which refers to this life.

Just an added thought about “anger” in this context. The OT saw a linkage between sin and sickness (cf. James 5:13-18). Jesus seems to modify this view in John 9:1-12. If God judged us in light of our sin we would all be sick and dying. The wonderful truth is we deserve “anger” but we get mercy, grace, and love! We, however, are not all healed (see Special Topic at 30:2)! Yet He is with us in our sufferings (cf. Rom. 8:18-25; 2 Cor. 4:17).

▣ **“His anger”** This root (BDB 60) is related to “nose” (i.e., red face) or “snort” (unspoken but vocal sign of human emotion). See Special Topic: God Described as Human (anthropomorphism) at Ps. 2:4-6

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHAT IS SIN UNTO DEATH?

A. Hermeneutical considerations

1. proper identification must be related to the historical setting of 1 John
 - a. the presence of gnostic false teachers in the churches (cf. 1 John 2:19,26; 3:7; 2 John 7)
 - (1) “Cerinthian” Gnostics taught that the man Jesus received the Christ spirit at his baptism and that the Christ spirit left before his death on the cross (cf. 1 John 5:6-8)
 - (2) “Docetic” Gnostics taught that Jesus was a divine spirit, not a true human being (cf. 1 John 1:1-3)
 - (3) Gnosticism revealed in the writings of the second century reflected two different views about the human body
 - (a) since salvation was a truth revealed to the mind, the human body was irrelevant to the spiritual realm. Therefore, whatever it desired it could have. These are often referred to as antinomian or libertine Gnostics.
 - (b) the other group concluded that since the body was inherently evil (i.e. Greek thought), any bodily desire should be shunned. These are called ascetic Gnostics.
 - b. these false teachers had left the church (cf. 1 John 2:19), but their influence had not!
2. proper identification must be related to the literary context of the whole book
 - a. 1 John was written to combat false teaching and assure the true believers
 - b. these two purposes can be seen in the tests of true believers
 - (1) doctrinal
 - (a) Jesus was truly human (cf. 1 John 1:1-3; 4:14)
 - (b) Jesus was truly God (cf. 1 John 1:2; 5:20)
 - (c) humans are sinful and responsible to a holy God (cf. 1 John 1:6,10)
 - (d) humans are also forgiven and made right with God by
 - i. Jesus' death (cf. 1 John 1:7; 2:1-2; 3:16; 4:9-10,14; 5:6-8)
 - ii. faith in Jesus (cf. 1 John 1:9; 3:23; 4:15; 5:1,4-5,10-12,13)

- (2) practical (positive)
 - (a) lifestyle obedience (cf. 1 John 2:3-5; 3:22,24; 5:2-3)
 - (b) lifestyle love (cf. 1 John 2:10; 3:11,14,18,23; 4:7,11-12,16-18,21)
 - (c) lifestyle Christlikeness (does not sin, cf. 1 John 1:7; 2:6,29; 3:6-9; 5:18)
 - (d) lifestyle victory over evil (cf. 1 John 2:13,14; 4:4; 5:4)
 - (e) His word abides in them (cf. 1 John 1:10; 2:14)
 - (f) they have the Spirit (cf. 1 John 3:24; 4:4-6,13)
 - (g) answered prayer (cf. 1 John 5:14-15)
- (3) practical (negative)
 - (a) lifestyle sin (cf. 1 John 3:8-10)
 - (b) lifestyle hate (cf. 1 John 2:9,11; 3:15; 4:20)
 - (c) lifestyle disobedience (cf. 1 John 2:4; 3:4)
 - (d) love the world (cf. 1 John 2:15-16)
 - (e) deny Christ (denies Father and Son, cf. 1 John 2:22-23; 4:2-3; 5:10-12)
- 3. proper identification must be linked to specific items in the relevant text (cf. 1 John 5:16-17)
 - a. does the term “brother” of 1 John 5:16 relate to both those committing a sin not leading to death and to those committing a sin leading to death?
 - b. were the offenders once members of the church (cf. 1 John 2:19)?
 - c. what is the textual significance of:
 - (1) no article with “sin”?
 - (2) the VERB “sees” as a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL with AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE?
 - d. how can the prayers of one Christian (cf. James 5:15-16) restore eternal life “zōē” to another without the sinner’s personal repentance?
 - e. how does 1 John 5:17 relate to the types of sin (unto death, not unto death)?

B. Theological problems

- 1. should an interpreter try to link this text with
 - a. the “unpardonable” sin of the Gospels
 - b. the “once out” sin of Hebrews 6 and 10

The context of 1 John does seem parallel to the unpardonable sin of the Pharisees in Jesus’ day (cf. Matt. 12:22-37; Mark 3:2-29) as well as the unbelieving Jews of Hebrews 6 and 10. All three groups (Pharisees, unbelieving Jews, and Gnostic false teachers) heard the gospel clearly, but refused to trust Jesus Christ.

- 2. should modern denominational questions be a theological grid to view this text?

Evangelicalism has overemphasized the beginning of the Christian experience and neglected the ongoing lifestyle evidences of true faith. Our modern theological questions would have shocked first century Christians. We want “certainty” based on selected biblical “proof-texts” and our own logical deductions or denominational biases. Our theological questions, grids, and distinctives reflect our own insecurities. We want more information and clarification than the Bible provides, so our systematic theologies take some small chunks of Scripture and weave huge webs of logical, western, specific doctrines!

Jesus’ words in Matthew 7 and Mark 7 were adequate for the early church! Jesus looks for disciples, not decisions, long term lifestyle faith, not short-term emotional faith (cf. Matt. 13:10-

23; John 8:31-59). Christianity is not an isolated past act, but an ongoing repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance. Christianity is not a ticket to heaven, purchased in the past, nor a fire insurance policy taken out to protect one from a lifestyle of selfish, godless living!

3. Does the sin unto death refer to physical death or eternal death? John's use of "zōē" in this context implies the contrast refers to eternal death. Is it possible that God takes home (physical death) sinning children? The implication of this context is that (1) the prayers of fellow believers and (2) the personal repentance of the offender combine to restore the believers, but if they continue in a lifestyle that brings reproach on the believing community, then the result may be an "untimely" or early physical departure from this life (cf. *When Critics Ask* by Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, p. 541).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:6-9

⁶Now as for me, I said in my prosperity,

"I will never be moved."

⁷O LORD, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong;

You hid Your face, I was dismayed.

⁸To You, O LORD, I called,

And to the LORD I made supplication:

⁹"What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit?

Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your faithfulness?

30:6-9 This strophe seems to reflect the fulfillment of the covenant promises of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. YHWH wanted to prosper His people to show the world His character. The psalmist, as a faithful follower, is asserting what YHWH did for him.

1. prospered him
2. gave him stability (i.e., "I will never be moved")
3. made him strong (i.e., figure of a mountain; LXX has "my majesty")
4. answered his prayers
5. protected him from death so he could praise YHWH's faithfulness (BDB 54)

The AB (p. 182) sees this strophe as a warning against the sin of overconfidence. The UBS *Handbook* (p. 282) sees it as his past inappropriate experience. However, I prefer the Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 confidence. The *Handbook* asserts that this Psalm, like Psalm 29, is a chiasmic pattern. If this is true then the middle of the chiasm should be the main truth. But note the middle would be verse 6, which both the UBS *Handbook* and AB say is an inappropriate experience. You cannot have it both ways!

30:7b It is unsure how v. 7b fits with v. 7a,c. The two VERBS (PERFECTS) describe a settled condition.

1. You hid Your face – BDB 711, KB 771, *Hiphil* PERFECT, "face," refers to personal presence, he felt YHWH had left him, was not available, did not hear his prayers.
2. I was (BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* PERFECT) dismayed – BDB 96, KB 111, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE. This term means "disturbed," "dismayed," or "terrified," cf. Job 4:5; 23:15; Ps. 6:4; 83:18; 90:7; 104:29; Isa. 13:8; 21:3; Jer. 51:32; Ezek. 26:18.

The JPSOA sees v. 7b in contrast to v. 8, YHWH made the psalmist "firm as a mighty mountain," but if/when He hid His face, it brought "terror." Therefore, he called out to YHWH in prayer (v 8). Prosperity alone, even covenant prosperity (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28) is not enough! We need God! We need

to feel His presence and pleasure! We were created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8) for fellowship with God. Nothing, nothing else can meet this need!

30:9 There are two rhetorical questions which, in context, expect a “no” reply.

▣ **“dust”** This (BDB 779) is a figurative expression for death (cf. Psalm 22:15,19; Isaiah 26:19; 29:4) or *Sheol*/pit. Humans were made of clay/dust (cf. Gen. 2:7) and to dust we return at death (cf. Gen. 3:19).

▣ **“will dust praise You?”** In the OT death was a conscious, but silent, existence (cf. Ps. 6:5; 88:11-12; 115:7; Eccl. 9:10; Isa. 38:18-19).

▣ **“Your faithfulness”** This is “amen” (BDB 54); see Special Topic at Psalm 12:1.

YHWH is faithful (BDB 54) and loyal (BDB 338) to His covenant. He is the One who does not change (cf. Mal. 3:6; Ps. 102:27; James 1:17; also note Heb. 13:8). Our hope, as faithful followers, is in the unchanging, merciful character of YHWH.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:10-12

¹⁰“Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me;

O Lord, be my helper.”

¹¹You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;

You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness,

¹²That *my* soul may sing praise to You and not be silent.

O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

30:10-12 This strophe starts out with three prayer requests (IMPERATIVES).

1. hear – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. be gracious – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. be my helper (BDB 740, KB 810) – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Notice what YHWH’s response caused in the psalmist.

1. turned him from mourning into dancing
2. loosed his sackcloth and girded him with gladness (“gladness” is a poetic way of contrasting sackcloth, i.e., festival garments)
3. caused him to sing praises and he will not be silent
4. caused him to give thanks forever

30:11 “sackcloth” This was worn as a sign of mourning.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GRIEVING RITES

The Israelites expressed sorrow for the death of a loved one and for personal repentance, as well as corporate crimes, in several ways:

1. tear outer robe, Gen. 37:29,34; 44:13; Jdgs. 11:35; 2 Sam. 1:11; 3:31; 1 Kgs. 21:27; Job 1:20
2. put on sackcloth, Gen. 37:34; 2 Sam. 3:31; 1 Kgs. 21:27; Jer. 48:37
3. take off shoes, 2 Sam. 15:30; Isa. 20:3
4. put hands on head, 2 Sam. 13:19; Jer. 2:37

5. put dust on head, Jos. 7:6; 1 Sam.4:12; Neh. 9:1
6. sit on the ground, Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 26:16 (lie on the ground, 2 Sam. 12:16); Isa. 47:1
7. beat the breast, 1 Sam. 25:1; 2 Sam. 11:26; Nah. 2:7
8. cut the body, Deut. 14:1; Jer. 16:6; 48:37
9. fast, 2 Sam. 12:16,21-23; 1 Kgs. 21:27; 1 Chr. 10:12; Neh. 1:4
10. chant a lament, 2 Sam. 1:17; 3:31; 2 Chr. 35:25
11. baldness (hair pulled out or shaved), Jer. 48:37
12. cut beards short, Jer. 48:37
13. cover head or face, 2 Sam. 15:30; 19:4

30:12 “that my soul may sing praise to You” The “my soul” is literally “glory” (BDB 458). The same consonants also mean “liver.” The UBS Text Project (p. 209) suggests it could be understood as

1. referring to the psalmist himself (i.e., inner most being – liver) by the term (LXX, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, JPSOA)
2. a VOCATIVE, “O Glory,” referring to YHWH

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does God heal all faithful followers?
2. Explain why verse 5 is such an important verse.
3. Is verse 6 a positive or negative statement?
4. How are verses 9 and 12 related?

PSALM 31

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Psalm of Complaint and of Praise <u>MT Intro</u> “For the Choir Director.” A Psalm of David.	The LORD, A Fortress in Adversity	Prayer For Deliverance From Personal Enemies	A Prayer of Trust in God	Prayer In Time of Ordeal
31:1-5	31:1-2	31:1-2	31:1-2	31:1-2a 31:2b-3
	31:3-5	31:3-5	31:3-5	31:4-5b 31:5c-7a
31:6-8	31:6-8	31:6-8	31:6-8	31:7b-8
31:9-13	31:9-13	31:9-10 31:11-13	31:9-10 31:11-13	31:9 31:10 31:11 31:11c-12 31:13
31:14-18	31:14-18	31:14-18	31:14-18	31:14-16 31:17-18
31:19-22	31:19-20 31:21-22	31:19-20 31:21-22	31:19-20 31:21-22	31:19 31:20 31:21-22
31:23-24	31:23-24	31:23-24	31:23-24	31:23-24

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph

2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There are so many Psalms where the author is seeking help from God against enemies. One wonders
 1. who are these enemies?
 2. why does the psalmist feel detached so often?
 3. were many of these written during the same period of the psalmist's life (probably David)?
- B. The psalmist faces several issues.
 1. personal sin and its mental and physical consequences (cf. 31:1-12)
 2. personal attacks by
 - a. enemies
 - b. neighbors
 - c. acquaintances
- C. The actions of the enemies are characterized as
 1. trying to trap him in a net, v. 4
 2. trying to get him to regard idols, v. 6
 3. slandering him, vv. 11,13,20
 4. counseling together against him, vv. 13,20
 5. persecuting him, v. 15
 6. having lying lips, v. 18
 7. speaking arrogantly, v. 18
- D. Many/most of the Psalms in Book One have similar themes and wording. This may reflect an unknown editing or compiling agenda. There was a purposeful structure to the different books of Psalms (see Introduction to the Psalter) but moderns are not sure what it was.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:1-5

¹In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge;

Let me never be ashamed;

In Your righteousness deliver me.

²Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly;

Be to me a rock of strength,

A stronghold to save me.

³For You are my rock and my fortress;

For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me.

⁴You will pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me,

For You are my strength.

**⁵Into Your hand I commit my spirit;
You have ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth.**

31:1-5 Notice the very personal way the author addresses YHWH. Notice the number of personal PRONOUNS. Biblical faith is a personal trust in a personal God. It is not initially about a creed or even a moral code but about a personal encounter! That encounter changes everything! All else is based on it.

▣ This strophe has several prayer requests.

1. Let me never be ashamed – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* COHORTATIVE; this shame could be connected to David’s sin (cf. Psalm 32; 51) or others’ attack on his reputation or motives, cf. Ps. 25:2-3,20; 31:1,17; 35:26; 69:6; 119:6,46,78,80. Shame sometimes means abandonment by YHWH (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 621-627).
2. Deliver me – BDB 812, KB 930, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. Incline Your ear to me – BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 17:6; 71:2; 86:1; 88:2; 102:2
4. Rescue me – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
5. Be my rock – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. Lead me – BDB 634, KB 685, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
7. Guide me – BDB 624, KB 675, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
8. Pull me out of their net – BDB 422, KB 425, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT

His prayer requests are based on

1. he has committed himself to YHWH, v. 5
2. YHWH has ransomed him, v. 5 (see Special Topic at Ps. 19:14)
3. YHWH is his strength, v. 4
4. YHWH is the God of truth/faithfulness, v. 5 (see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1)

31:1 “refuge” This alludes to a strong hiding place of safety and security. See note at Ps. 2:12.

▣ **“righteousness”** See Special Topic at Ps. 1:5.

31:2 “rock” See note at Ps. 18:2. There are two different Hebrew words translated “rock”; in v. 2 – BDB 700; in v. 3 – BDB 849. Both refer to a place of stability, protection, and security (cf. Deut. 32:4,15,18,30).

31:3 “fortress” See note at Ps. 18:2.

▣ **“For Your name’s sake”** See notes at Psalm 23:3 and 25:11. It represents YHWH’s character. See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God at Ps. 9:10b.

31:3-4 Notice the series of IMPERFECTS that speak of continuous, ongoing actions.

1. lead – BDB 634, KB 685, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
2. guide – BDB 624, KB 675, *Piel* IMPERFECT
3. pull out – BDB 422, KB 425, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT

31:4 “net” This was an instrument of hunting (BDB 440). It came to be used figuratively of hurting or capturing humans (cf. Ps. 9:15; 10:9; 35:7-8; 57:6; 140:5).

31:5 “into Your hand I commit my spirit” This was quoted by Jesus on the cross just before His death (cf. Luke 23:46).

This VERB (BDB 823, KB 955, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) has a wide semantic field. Here it denotes an ongoing trust. This trust is based on who God is (i.e., “God of truth,” “faithful God”), not the merits of the psalmist.

▣ **“hand”** See Special Topic at Psalm 7:3-4.

▣ **“spirit”** This is the Hebrew word *ruah* (BDB 924). Here it is the unseen life force connected to YHWH breathing life into Adam in Gen. 2:7. When it leaves the body that body goes to the holding place of the dead (*Sheol*, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BREATH, WIND, SPIRIT (רוּחַ and *pneuma*)

The Hebrew term *ruach* (BDB 924) and the Greek term *pneuma* (cf. John 3:5,8) can mean “spirit,” “breath” or “wind” (cf. John 3:5,8). The Spirit is often associated with creation (cf. Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; Ps. 104:29-30; 147:14-18). The OT does not clearly define the relationship between God and the Spirit. In Job 28:26-28; Ps. 104:24 and Pro. 3:19; 8:22-23, God used wisdom (a FEMININE NOUN) to create all things. In the NT Jesus is said to be God’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:2-3). As in redemption, so too, in creation, all three persons of the Godhead are involved. Genesis 1 itself does not emphasize any secondary cause.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:6-8

**⁶I hate those who regard vain idols,
But I trust in the LORD.
⁷I will rejoice and be glad in Your lovingkindness,
Because You have seen my affliction;
You have known the troubles of my soul,
⁸And You have not given me over into the hand of the enemy;
You have set my feet in a large place.**

31:6-8 This strophe is dominated by PERFECTS that denote a complete or settled condition.

1. I hate those who regard vain idols – BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* PERFECT. The intensity of the psalmist’s requests for YHWH to judge is based on his worldview (i.e., viewing the world as YHWH’s agent). He hates those who break or ignore YHWH’s covenant. The LXX has “You hate.”
2. I trust in YHWH – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PERFECT; this is a recurrent theme, cf. Ps. 4:5; 13:5; 25:2; 26:1; 28:7; 31:6,14; 52:8; 56:3,4,11; 91:2. If “fear of YHWH is the beginning of knowledge” (cf. Pro. 1:7), then trust is the key to knowing Him personally.
3. YHWH sees his affliction – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* PERFECT (cf. Exod. 3:7-8)
4. YHWH knows his trouble – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6)
5. YHWH has not given him into the hands of his enemy – BDB 688, KB 742, *Hiphil* PERFECT
6. YHWH has set his feet in a large place – BDB 763, KB 840, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 18:19; 118:5; a large place is the opposite of a narrow place/strait, which is an idiom of distress (cf. Ps. 4:1; 18:19; 118:5)

31:7 This verse has two *Qal* COHORTATIVES.

1. I will rejoice – BDB 162, KB 189
2. I will be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333



NASB	“lovingkindness”
NKJV, LXX	“mercy”
NRSV	“steadfast love”
TEV	“constant love”
NJB	“faithful love”
JPSOA	“faithfulness”
REB	“unfailing love”

All of these English translations are trying to express the essence of the powerful covenant NOUN, *hesed*. It denotes YHWH’s unbreakable commitment to the covenant. See Special Topic at Ps. 5:7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:9-13

- ⁹Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
My eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body *also*.
¹⁰For my life is spent with sorrow
And my years with sighing;
My strength has failed because of my iniquity,
And my body has wasted away.
¹¹Because of all my adversaries, I have become a reproach,
Especially to my neighbors,
And an object of dread to my acquaintances;
Those who see me in the street flee from me.
¹²I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind;
I am like a broken vessel.
¹³For I have heard the slander of many,
Terror is on every side;
While they took counsel together against me,
They schemed to take away my life.

31:9-13 This strophe uses parts of the human body to express the psalmist’s distress (BDB 865 II).

1. eye (BDB 744), v. 9, cf. Ps. 6:7; 38:10
2. soul (BDB 659), v. 10 (i.e., *nephesh*, see note at Ps. 3:2)
3. body (BDB 105), v. 10
4. body (lit. “bones,” BDB 782), v. 10

Stress (like sin, cf. v. 10c; Psalm 32, 51) causes physical manifestations.

1. sorrow
2. sighing
3. failure of strength
4. bones wasting away (VERB, BDB 799, KB 898, *Qal* PERFECT, is used twice in this context, vv. 9 and 10 and only one other time in the OT, cf. Ps. 6:7)

More and more modern medicine is understanding the link between the mind and the body. They are a unity (cf. v. 12).

31:11 The slander and distress, which have had such physical consequences, also bring social consequences.

1. I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors.
2. I have become an object of dread to my acquaintances.
3. People flee from me.
4. I am forgotten (out of mind) as a dead man.

31:13 This verse describes the actions of his adversaries.

1. they slander him (i.e., their false words are the next line, “terror on every side”)
2. they counsel against him
3. they schemed (BDB 273, cf. Ps. 37:12) to take his life (parallel to #2)

In light of these actions, the IMPERATIVE “be gracious to me, O LORD” of verse 9 is understandable!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:14-18

¹⁴But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD,

I say, “You are my God.”

¹⁵My times are in Your hand;

Deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from those who persecute me.

¹⁶Make Your face to shine upon Your servant;

Save me in Your lovingkindness.

¹⁷Let me not be put to shame, O LORD, for I call upon You;

Let the wicked be put to shame, let them be silent in Sheol.

¹⁸Let the lying lips be mute,

Which speak arrogantly against the righteous

With pride and contempt.

31:14-18 This strophe has numerous emphatic prayer requests based on

1. the psalmist’s trust in YHWH (*Qal* PERFECT, cf. v. 6), v. 14
2. YHWH is his God, v. 14
3. his life is in YHWH’s hand, v. 15

Here are the requests.

1. deliver me – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 7:2; 18:17; 22:20; 31:2; 39:8; 51:14; 59:1; 69:14; 109:21; 119:170; 120:2; 142:6; 143:9; 144:7,11; this is the cry of the faithful follower’s heart, deliverance from the spiritual, mental, and physical aspects of life in a fallen world
2. make Your face shine on me – BDB 21, KB 24, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Num. 6:25-26; Ps. 4:6; 67:1; 80:3,7,19; 119:135
3. save me in Your lovingkindness – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, many times in the Psalms
4. let me not be put to shame – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
5. let the wicked be put to shame – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
6. let them be silent in Sheol – BDB 198, KB 226, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
7. let the lying lips be dumb – BDB 47, KB 57, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

31:15 “My times are in Your hand” Faithful followers believe that time and eternity are in God’s foreknowledge and control. Nothing surprises Him (cf. Job 14:5,16; 28:24; 31:4; 34:21; Ps. 139:1-16, esp. v. 16).

31:17 Notice the contrast.

1. the psalmist speaks to God
 - 2-3. the wicked are silent (i.e., dead) or else they speak arrogantly with pride and contempt
- You can know people by what they say (cf. Matt. 12:35-37). The tongue reveals the heart!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:19-22

¹⁹**How great is Your goodness,
Which You have stored up for those who fear You,
Which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You,
Before the sons of men!**

²⁰**You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the conspiracies of man;
You keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues.**

²¹**Blessed be the LORD,
For He has made marvelous His lovingkindness to me in a besieged city.**

²²**As for me, I said in my alarm,
“I am cut off from before Your eyes”;
Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications
When I cried to You.**

31:19-22 This strophe describes YHWH’s “goodness” (BDB 375, cf. Ps. 145:7). Probably this strophe is to be understood after YHWH has answered the psalmist’s prayer requests found early in the psalm.

1. It is stored up for those who fear YHWH.
2. It is for those who take refuge in YHWH.
3. YHWH hides His people
 - a. in a secret place of His presence
 - b. in a shelter/pavilion
4. YHWH made His lovingkindness marvelous to the psalmist.
5. YHWH heard his supplications.

31:19 “before the sons of men” Not only does YHWH defend and protect, but He acknowledges our special relationship to Him before our enemies (cf. Ps. 23:5).

31:20 The secret place is the inner (or back) shrine of the temple/tabernacle (cf. Ps. 27:5). This was a special place where the personal presence of YHWH was manifested (i.e., ark of the covenant).

31:21 “in a besieged city” Although we do not know the historical setting of this Psalm, this phrase seems to be metaphorical. It describes a person who feels surrounded by wicked, evil, lying people.

Even though the psalmist feels isolated, he believes YHWH hears and will act on his behalf.

The UBS Text Project (p. 213) gives this reading an “A” rating versus “through distress,” found in NEB.

The JPSOA translates this phrase as if it characterized why YHWH should be “blessed,” 31:22a. He is strong and unchanging (i.e., “a veritable bastion”). The Jewish Study Bible margin links this to YHWH as “a rock of strength,” “a stronghold,” “a crag” (i.e., rock), and “a fortress” in 31:2-3 (p. 1316).

31:22 “I am cut off from before Your eyes” The Jewish Study Bible (p. 1316) interprets this phrase as meaning “absent from the temple” (i.e., 2 Chr. 26:21, where the same phrasing is used of Uzziah being unable, as a leper, to go into the temple). The *Niphal* form of this VERB (BDB 173, KB 202) is found only here in the OT.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:23-24

²³O love the LORD, all you His godly ones!

The LORD preserves the faithful

And fully recompenses the proud doer.

²⁴Be strong and let your heart take courage,

All you who hope in the LORD.

31:23-24 As is true so often in the Psalms the last strophe is

1. a warning
2. an admonition
3. a corporate prayer

Here it is #2. The first VERBS of both verses are PLURAL IMPERATIVES.

1. love YHWH – BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* IMPERATIVE; usually this VERB refers to YHWH’s love or is SINGULAR of the psalmist’s love
2. be strong – BDB 304, KB 302, *Qal* IMPERATIVE; it is followed by a synonym, BDB 54, KB 5, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE (Hebrew parallelism)

31:23 “His godly ones” This refers to faithful followers (cf. Ps. 30:4; 37:28; 50:5), not angels (cf. Ps. 29:1).

▣ The life experiences (and afterlife experiences) of

1. the faithful – BDB 52 I
2. the proud doer – BDB 793 I, KB 889, *Qal* PARTICIPLE CONSTRUCT BDB 144

are contrasted.

1. preserved – BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
2. recompensed – BDB 1022, KB 1521, *Piel* PARTICIPLE

31:24 What a wonderful admonition for all faithful followers (cf. Ps. 27:14; 37:34; 62:5; 130:5; Isa. 25:9)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is the psalmist in such trouble?
2. List the physical and social consequences of sin.
3. Explain “shame” in an OT context.
4. Is verse 21 literal or metaphorical?
5. Why do so many Psalms written by an individual end in a corporate way?

PSALM 32

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Blessedness of Forgiveness and of Trust in God <u>MT Intro</u> <i>A Psalm of David.</i> A Maskil	The Joy of Forgiveness	Thanksgiving For Healing	Confession and Forgiveness	Candid Admission of Sin
32:1-2	32:1-2	32:1-2	32:1-2	32:1-2
32:3-7	32:3-5	32:3-4 32:5	32:3-4 32:5	32:3-4 32:5
	32:6-7	32:6-7	32:6-7	32:6-7
32:8-11	32:8-9	32:8-9	32:8-9	32:8 32:9
	32:10-11	32:10-11	32:10-11	32:10 32:11

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Because of the MT introduction many scholars believe this Psalm, like Psalm 51, describes David's sin (i.e., sexual encounter with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, cf. 2 Samuel 11), cover up (cf. 2 Samuel 12), and forgiveness (i.e., although the consequences of his sin destroyed his family). In Romans 4:7-8 Paul quotes 32:1-2 (LXX) as referring to David.

- B. This is surely possible but it may have a wider implication and purpose (cf. PLURALS of v. 11). Sin and its consequences are common to all humans (cf. Rom. 1:8-3:18), even covenant humans (cf. Romans 7; 1 John 1:5-10).
- C. The psalmist's physical problems were the merciful acts of God that would not allow the sinful covenant person to remain in his/her rebellion (cf. Heb. 12:7-13). There are consequences to sin, thank God, the God of mercy pursues us in spite of them. As sin abounds, grace does much more abound (cf. Rom. 5:20).
- D. One can tell which concepts, events, and issues are central to a culture by the number of words used to describe it. Obviously Israel was concerned with covenant rebellion (cf. 1 Kings 8), as well as its forgiveness. There are many words for sin and rebellion.
- E. Psalm 31 and Psalm 32 may have been placed together by an editor or compiler, because they both discuss the physical result of sin (cf. Ps. 31:9-10; 32:3-4).
- F. The NASB Study Bible (p. 769) gives an interesting theory about the speakers.
1. dialogue between David and YHWH in the tabernacle, vv. 1-2
 2. David speaks to YHWH in the hearing of the gathered worshipers, vv. 3-7
 3. a priest addresses David on YHWH's behalf, vv. 8-10
 4. David speaks to the gathered worshipers, v. 11
- G. This Psalm emphasizes
1. the sinfulness of humans
 2. the merciful character of God
 3. how a sinful human can become acceptable to a holy God (i.e., confession)
- Paul's use of Ps. 32:1-2 in Romans 4, where he discusses OT examples of "justification by grace through faith" (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3; Eph. 2:8-9), reveals the context as an OT example of the theme developed and prioritized in the NT. This is the heart of how one is forgiven, although the mechanism for that forgiveness (i.e., the gospel of Christ) is not mentioned. It still clearly reveals the merciful, gracious availability of YHWH's forgiveness (i.e., "lifted and removed" and "covered").
- If YHWH can forgive David, He can forgive you! Receive it through confession and repentance! Then stand forgiven in the promises!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:1-2

¹How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered!

²How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no deceit!

32:1 The term "blessed" (BDB 80, cf. Ps. 1:1, is used 26 out of 45 times in Psalms) is recurrent in Wisdom Literature and describes the faithful followers.

1. Job 5:17; Ps. 94:12 – disciplined by *Shaddai*
2. Psalm 1:1 – studies and walks in God's word

3. Psalm 2:12 – takes refuge in YHWH
4. Psalm 32:1-2 – sin is forgiven
5. Psalm 40:4; 84:12; Pro. 16:20 – trusts in YHWH
6. Psalm 41:1-3; Pro. 14:21 – considers the poor
7. Psalm 80:6 – strength is in YHWH
8. Psalm 89:12 – know joy and walk in the light of YHWH’s countenance
9. Psalm 119:2 – seek Him with whole heart, observe His testimony
10. Psalm 112:1; 128:1 – fears YHWH, walks in His ways
11. Psalm 146:5 – YHWH is his help
12. Proverbs 3:13 – finds wisdom
13. Proverbs 8:32,34 – listens to YHWH, keeps His ways
14. Proverbs 28:14 – fears YHWH
15. Proverbs 29:18 – keeps YHWH’s laws

The first two verses of this Psalm from the LXX are quoted by Paul in Romans 4:7-8 in his example of David as a blessed man because his sin was forgiven.

Notice the different words used to describe rebellion against YHWH (cf. v. 5).

1. transgression – BDB 833, KB 981; it denotes an intentional breaking of that which is God’s will (i.e., covenant)
2. sin – BDB 308, KB 306; it denotes missing (BDB 306) a set target, again not by ignorance but willfully
3. iniquity – BDB 730, KB 799; misdeed, guilt (#1,2,3 appear together in Exod. 34:7; Lev. 16:21; Job 12:23; here; Isa. 59:12; Ezek. 21:24; Dan. 9:24)
4. deceit – BDB 941, KB 636; means treachery, trickery, fraud (cf. Ps. 52:2; 101:7; 120:2-3)

The UBS *Handbook* mentions that the psalmist purposely alternated MASCULINE, FEMININE (twice) to show completeness (p. 303).

YHWH’s (note the PASSIVE PARTICIPLES) forgiveness is described as righteousness given to sinners based on God’s mercy and their repentance (this is the theological concept of imputed [cf. BDB 362, KB 359, Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6]).

1. forgiven (lit. “lifted and taken away”) – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. Exod. 32:32; 34:7; Num. 14:18,19; Micah 7:18; same word negated in Exod. 23:21; Jos. 24:19; Job 7:21; Isa. 2:9
2. covered (i.e., puts out of sight, theological concept in Isa. 38:17; 43:25; Micah 7:19) – BDB 491, KB 487, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE

The result is a person with no deceit/guile (cf. John 1:47). This does not mean sinless, but repentant.

32:2 “man” This is the Hebrew word *Adam* (BDB 9). In the early parts of Genesis (Genesis 1-3) it refers to Adam, the original human creation, but it took on the sense of humanity in general.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:3-7

³When I kept silent *about my sin*, my body wasted away

Through my groaning all day long.

⁴For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;

My vitality was drained away *as with the fever heat of summer.* Selah.

⁵I acknowledged my sin to You,

And my iniquity I did not hide;

I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”;

And You forgave the guilt of my sin.

Selah.

**⁶Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found;
Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.
⁷You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble;
You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.**

32:3-7 This strophe contrasts two ways to deal with sin.

1. be silent, hide it
 - a. bones wasted away, cf. Ps. 31:9-10
 - b. groaning all day long
 - c. vitality (lit. “juicy,” BDB 545, cf. Num. 11:8; used here of body fluids) drained away (NET Bible suggests an emendation to “to my destruction,” p. 888 #29)
2. acknowledge, confess
 - a. YHWH forgives the guilt of sin (cf. Exod. 34:7; Num. 14:18; Ps. 85:2)
 - b. sense of security returns
 - c. YHWH is a hiding place again
 - d. YHWH preserves him from trouble
 - e. he is surrounded with songs of deliverance

There is a play on YHWH’s hand; in judgment it was heavy (v. 4; Ps. 38:2; 39:10; Job 23:2) but in confession it protected him (vv. 6-7).

32:4,5,7 “Selah” See note at Ps. 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII.

32:5 “I will confess” The parallelism of lines 1 and 2 demands a rare meaning of the VERB (BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense). Usually the VERB in *Hiphil* means “thanksgiving,” but in a few contexts “confess” is the apparent meaning.

1. 1 Kgs. 8:33,35; 2 Chr. 6:24,26 it denotes “confess YHWH’s name”
2. here and in Pro. 28:13 the context implies “confess sin”

32:6 “in a time when You may be found” This ambiguous phrase can be understood in several ways.

1. there is an appointed/appropriate time for repentance (LXX, Vulgate, NKJV)
2. pray in time of need or distress (cf. 2 Chr. 15:4; emendation cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB)
3. MT has “at a time of finding” (cf. Ps. 103:8-14; Isa. 55:6). JPSOA translates this as “upon discovering [his sin].”

▣ **“in a flood of great waters”** Water, raging water, is often used as an idiom of trouble/distress/attack (cf. Ps. 69:1; 124:5; 144:7 and most beautifully in Isa. 43:2).

32:7 This refers to the tabernacle/temple. The songs of praise are worship songs or liturgy.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:8-11

**⁸I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go;
I will counsel you with My eye upon you.
⁹Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding,
Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check,
Otherwise they will not come near to you.
¹⁰Many are the sorrows of the wicked,**

But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him.

¹¹Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones;

And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.

32:8-11 The psalmist speaks to himself (and others, v. 5) on YHWH's behalf. Here is the divine response, v. 8 (three COHORTATIVES)!

1. verse 5, I will confess my transgressions – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense (see fuller note at v. 5)
2. verse 8, I will instruct you – BDB 968, KB 1328, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
I will teach you – BDB 434, KB 436, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
I will counsel you – BDB 419, KB 421, *Qal* COHORTATIVE, cf. Ps. 16:7

32:8 “in the way” This is an idiom for a godly life (cf. Ps. 1:1; 25:8-9).

▣ **“with My eye upon you”** This is an idiom of personal care and presence (cf. 32:18; Ps. 34:15 [quoted in 1 Pet. 3:12]; Job 36:7).

For “eye” used of YHWH see Special Topic: God Described as Human (anthropomorphism) at Psalm 2:4-6.

32:9 The person (PLURAL) who will not repent is described in terms of rebellious, domesticated animals (cf. Isa. 1:2-3). Fallen humanity lives on an animal level characterized by “more and more for me at any cost!”

▣ Again a contrast.

1. the wicked – many sorrows
2. the faithful follower (i.e., “he who trusts YHWH”), covenant loyalty and love will surround him (cf. 32:7b)

▣ **“lovingkindness”** See Special Topic at Psalm 5:7.

▣ **“shall surround”** This VERB (BDB 685, KB 738, *Poel* IMPERFECT) is also used in v. 7 of songs of deliverance and here of YHWH's lovingkindness (also note Deut. 32:10; the ADJECTIVE is used in Ps. 34:7; 125:2). What a wonderful idiom of YHWH's presence and protection!

32:11 A series of PLURAL IMPERATIVES instructing the faithful follower.

1. be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. rejoice – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. shout for joy – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the physical problems related to unconfessed sin. What does it mean to “confess”?
2. How are Psalm 32 and 51 related?
3. Explain what verse 6a means. Is there a time to confess which may pass (i.e., window of opportunity)?
4. Who is speaking in verses 8-9?

PSALM 33

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Praise to the Creator and Preserver No MT Intro.	The Superiority of the LORD in Creation and History	Hymn to God as Creator and LORD of History	A Song of Praise	Hymn to Providence
33:1-5	33:1-3 33:4-5	33:1-3 33:4-5	33:1-3 33:4-5	33:1-3 33:4-5
33:6-12	33:6-7 33:8-9 33:10-12	33:6-7 33:8-9 33:10-12	33:6-7 33:8-9 33:10-12	33:6-7 33:8-9 33:10-12
33:13-17	33:13-15 33:16-17	33:13-17	33:13-15 33:16-17	33:13-15 33:16-17
3:18-22	33:18-19 33:20-22	33:18-19 33:20-22	33:18-19 33:20-22	33:18-19 33:20-22

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The NASB Study Bible (p. 770) suggests this Psalm is part of a liturgy.
 1. Levitical choir
 - a. leader, vv. 1-3
 - b. choir, vv. 4-19
 2. gathered worshipers respond, vv. 22-23

- B. It has no MT title (like Psalms 1, 2, 10), but the “new song,” in verse 3, implies some major historical event. Because of vv. 16-17, probably it refers to a military victory.
- C. I am moved by the universal scope of YHWH’s purposes that include all humans (i.e., see use of “all” in 33:8,13-15). Note the shocking affirmation of v. 5b! See the full list of texts that show the inclusion of Gentiles from the very beginning as YHWH’s ultimate purpose in covenant, 33:10-12 in my notes.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:1-5

- ¹Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones;
Praise is becoming to the upright.
- ²Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre;
Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings.
- ³Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.
- ⁴For the word of the LORD is upright,
And all His work is *done* in faithfulness.
- ⁵He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.

33:1-5 The first three verses set the mood of the Psalm in praise to God (i.e., five parallel IMPERATIVES).

1. sing for joy in the Lord – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* IMPERATIVE (this same VERB ends Psalm 32)
2. praise – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. sing praises to Him – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
4. sing to Him – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. play skillfully (BDB 618, KB 668, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) with a shout of joy – BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

Verses 4 and 5 give the reasons for praise.

1. YHWH’s word (BDB 182) is upright (BDB 449)
2. all His work is done in faithfulness (BDB 53, see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1)
3. He loves righteousness (BDB 842, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5) and justice (BDB 1048, see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5-6)
4. the earth is full of YHWH’s lovingkindness (BDB 338, cf. Ps. 119:64; see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7)

The key to peace and security is the faithful follower’s belief and trust in the unchanging, merciful, gracious character of the covenant-making God (cf. Ps. 102:27; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8)! The chief character of the Bible is God! It is His story! It is His project and purpose!

33:2 Two stringed instruments are mentioned.

1. lyre (BDB 490) – this had two to four strings. It was widely used in the ANE. This is what David played for King Saul to soothe him (cf. 1 Sam.16:16).
2. harp of ten strings (BDB 614 CONSTRUCT BDB 797). It was part of a group of instruments used in both secular and worship settings (cf. 1 Sam.10:5).

▣ **“new song”** The peoples of the ANE wrote songs to commemorate major events and persons (cf. Exodus 15; 1 Samuel 22). Here the person is YHWH, the Creator (cf. Ps. 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa. 42:10; Rev. 5:9; 14:3).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:6-12

**⁶By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And by the breath of His mouth all their host.
⁷He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;
He lays up the deeps in storehouses.
⁸Let all the earth fear the LORD;
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
⁹For He spoke, and it was done;
He commanded, and it stood fast.
¹⁰The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations;
He frustrates the plans of the peoples.
¹¹The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
The plans of His heart from generation to generation.
¹²Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.**

33:6-12 This strophe has two major truths.

1. YHWH is creator, vv. 6-9 (see Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7)
2. YHWH has a purpose for the nations, vv. 10-12 (see Special Topic at Psalm 2 Introduction)

33:6 “the word of the LORD” This surely reflects Genesis 1-2 (cf. Psalm 104). I hope you will take a moment and look online at my exegetical commentary on Genesis 1-2 at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

In Hebrew thought, creation was from nothing (*ex nihilo*) by the spoken word (*fiat*, cf. Ps. 33:9; Genesis 1; Ps. 148:5; 2 Cor. 4:6; Heb. 11:3). The word of God is an idiom for the mind or will of God. Modern believers fight over many issues connected to Genesis 1-2. A new book by John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, has been a blessing to me as I have struggled with these issues.

▣ **“heavens”** This refers to the atmosphere above the earth. The ancients saw it as a hard dome of stretched skin with windows for the rain. Remember the Bible is not “anti-scientific” but “pre-scientific.” It describes things with the five human senses, as they appear (i.e., phenomenal language). Be careful of modern western literalism. The Bible is an ancient eastern book! The Bible must be God’s word to its day before it can be God’s word to our day.

If the issue of proper principles for Bible interpretation interests you, see my Bible Interpretation Seminar (video, audio, written text) at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

▣ **“all their host”** This refers to completed creation of this planet (cf. Gen. 2:1). The ancients saw the heavenly lights (sun, moon, stars, planets, comets) as moving across a dome. They were not gods but just part of YHWH’s beautiful physical creation. I think Genesis 1 functions theologically to depreciate the Babylonian gods, just as the plagues of Exodus 7-11 function to depreciate the Egyptian gods.

33:7 The subject of “waters” has several aspects.

1. Genesis does not specifically mention God creating water.

2. In ANE mythology salt water and fresh water were gods. YHWH defeats them!
3. Water becomes the means of YHWH's judgment and starting again with Noah (cf. Genesis 6-9).
4. Water was crucial for ANE peoples. They developed fertility worship as a way to ensure the regular cycles of nature (i.e., rain in its season).



NASB, NKJV,

REB "as a heap"

NASB margin "in a water skin"

NRSV "as in a bottle"

NJB "like a dam"

LXX "like a wineskin"

JPSOA "like a mound"

The MT has "heap" (BDB 622, **הָרָה**, cf. Exod. 15:8; Jos. 3:13,16; Ps. 78:13). It seems to refer to Gen. 1:9. The UBS Text Project gives it a "B" rating (i.e., some doubt).

The NASB margin, NRSV, LXX take it from a different root, BDB 609 (cf. Jos. 9:4,13; Jdgs. 4:19; Ps. 56:8; 119:83).

There is an Akkadian and Ugaritic root, **כַּנָּה**, which means "jar" or "bottle."

33:8 This verse starts out with two VERBS used in a JUSSIVE sense (i.e., "let us. . .").

1. let all the earth fear/revere YHWH (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 67:7)
2. let all the inhabitants of the world (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:2) stand in awe (BDB 158, KB 185, *Qal* IMPERFECT) of Him

Notice the parallelism. YHWH, not nature, is to be feared. The enemy of biblical faith today in western societies is "naturalism," an agentless, purposeless universe.

33:9 See note at verse 6.

33:10-12 The theological assertions related to physical creation now focus the purpose of that creation, which is fellowship with the Creator (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 3:8).

The "nations" (i.e., Gentiles) are not a second thought but YHWH's purpose from the beginning (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5; Ps. 22:27; 66:1-4; 86:8-10; Isa. 2:2-4; 12:4-5; 25:6-9; 42:6-12; 45:22-23; 49:5-6; 51:4-5; 56:6-8; 60:1-3; 66:23; Micah 4:14; Mal. 1:11; John 3:16; 4:42; Acts 10:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:1; 4:14). See Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases at Intro. to Psalm 2.

33:10 "the counsel" The "counsel (BDB 420, i.e., purpose) of the LORD stands forever" (cf. Job 23:13; Pro. 19:21). Amen!

33:12 Does God choose some to salvation or all? This is the difficult question of God's sovereignty versus human free will. See Special Topic: Election/Predestination and the Need for a Theological Balance at Ps. 25:12.

The love, plan, and purposes of YHWH include, but are larger than, the descendants of Abraham! He wants all to know Him (see lists of Scripture texts above)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:13-17

¹³The LORD looks from heaven;

He sees all the sons of men;

¹⁴From His dwelling place He looks out

**On all the inhabitants of the earth,
15He who fashions the hearts of them all,
He who understands all their works.
16The king is not saved by a mighty army;
A warrior is not delivered by great strength.
17A horse is a false hope for victory;
Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength.**

33:13-17 This strophe focuses on YHWH's immanence (cf. Ps. 14:2; 102:19). He knows what is happening on earth in individual lives (cf. Exod. 3:7-9; Matt. 6:25-34; 10:30; Luke 21:18; Acts 27:34; this same imagery is found in several OT texts, i.e., 1 Sam. 14:45; 2 Sam. 14:11; 1 Kgs. 1:52). Faithful followers' lives are not controlled by luck, chance, fate, but are directed by faith, by God! Live boldly for Him!

Notice the number of times "all" (BDB 481) appears in this Psalm, 33:8a,b, 13b, 14b, 15a,b. YHWH created and takes note of all His human creation! Life is a gift with a purpose. All humans will give an account to God for their stewardship of that gift!

33:15 YHWH fashions (BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Gen. 2:7,8,19) all humans and knows their lives (cf. Psalm 139). He is a proper judge because He knows our will, motives, acts, and consequences (see full lists of texts on this subject at Psalm 28:4).

33:16-17 Human events, history, is not haphazard but purposeful. YHWH even uses evil for His purposes. Things do not just happen! Now to be fair, this is a fallen world and all that occurs is not the will of YHWH. He allows our choices to bear fruit (i.e., good or bad). The earth has been affected by mankind's sin (cf. Genesis 3; Isa. 53:6; Rom. 8:18-23). The mystery is how

1. YHWH's sovereignty
2. human choices
3. physical activity mesh

The eyes of faith search for God in all events (cf. vv. 18-22). The wicked search for power, riches, evils, disasters and opportunities for self! Humans should not hope in military power (cf. Psalm 2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:18-22

**18Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him,
On those who hope for His lovingkindness,
19To deliver their soul from death
And to keep them alive in famine.
20Our soul waits for the LORD;
He is our help and our shield.
21For our heart rejoices in Him,
Because we trust in His holy name.
22Let Your lovingkindness, O LORD, be upon us,
According as we have hoped in You.**

33:18-22 Notice how the faithful follower is characterized.

1. those who fear YHWH, v. 18
2. those who hope for His lovingkindness, v. 18

3. those who wait for YHWH, v. 20
4. those who see Him as their help and shield, v. 20
5. those who rejoice in Him, v. 21
6. those who trust in His holy name, v. 21
7. those who hope (lit. ‘wait’) in Him, v. 22

YHWH will

1. keep His eye on them, vv. 13-15
2. deliver them (BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
3. keep them (BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
4. help (BDB 740) and protect (BDB 171) them

Notice how at the conclusion of many of the Psalms, the PLURAL is used to widen the prayer/praise from one to all faithful followers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the IMPERATIVES in verses 1-3 that relate to musical worship. Why is music such an important aspect of worship?
2. How do verses 6-9 reflect Genesis 1?
3. Explain verse 11 in your own words.
4. How does verse 15 reflect Gen. 1:26-28?
5. Does YHWH have an “eye”?

PSALM 34

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD A Provider and Deliverer	The Happiness of Those Who Trust in God	Thanksgiving For Deliverance From Trouble (An Acrostic)	In Praise of God's Goodness	In Praise of God's Justice (An Acrostic)
<u>MT Intro</u> <i>A Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed.</i>				
34:1-3	34:1-3	34:1-3	34:1-3	34:1 (<i>Aleph</i>)
				34:2 (<i>Bet</i>)
				34:3 (<i>Gimel</i>)
34:4-7	34:4-7	34:4-10	34:4-7	34:4 (<i>Dalet</i>)
				34:5 (<i>He</i>)
				34:6 (<i>Zain</i>)
				34:7 (<i>Het</i>)
34:8-14	34:8-10		34:8-10	34:8 (<i>Tet</i>)
				34:9 (<i>Yod</i>)
				34:10 (<i>Kaph</i>)
	34:11-14	34:11-14	34:11-14	34:11 (<i>Lamed</i>)
				34:12 (<i>Mem</i>)
				34:13 (<i>Nun</i>)
				34:14 (<i>Samek</i>)
34:15-18	34:15-16	34:15-18	34:15-18	34:15 (<i>Ain</i>)
	34:17-18			34:16 (<i>Pe</i>)
				34:17 (<i>Zade</i>)
				34:18 (<i>Qoph</i>)
34:19-22	34:19-22	34:19-22	34:19-21	34:19 (<i>Resh</i>)
				34:20 (<i>Shin</i>)
				34:21-22 (<i>Taw</i>)
			34:22	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is an acrostic psalm. Each verse (except v. 5, which has two Hebrew letters) starts with a sequential letter of the Hebrew alphabet, 22 letters.
It is interesting that if an acrostic poem goes beyond 22 letters the next letter is regularly *Pe*.
- B. There are several examples of the acrostic form.
 1. Psalm 9-10 (but not complete, five consonants missing and two reversed)
 2. Psalm 25 (one consonant missing)
 3. Psalm 34 (one verse has two consonants)
 4. Psalm 37 (every two verses starts with sequential letters)
 5. Psalm 111 (two consonants for each verse)
 6. Psalm 112 (two consonants for each verse)
 7. Psalm 119 (eight verses for each sequential consonant)
 8. Psalm 145 (not complete)
- C. Notice that YHWH (i.e., LORD) occurs in almost every verse. The Psalm is about YHWH. Humans know Him by
 1. His acts (cf. Nehemiah 9)
 2. His promises (esp. Genesis 12; Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30)
 3. His covenant (Genesis – Deuteronomy)
 4. His Son (John 1:1-14; Col. 1:13-16; Heb. 1:2-3)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:1-3

¹**I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.**
²**My soul will make its boast in the LORD;
The humble will hear it and rejoice.**
³**O magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together.**

34:1-3 This is a strophe of witness. It starts with a SINGULAR COHORTATIVE and ends with a PLURAL. YHWH is too great and wonderful in character and deed not to be praised!

1. I will bless YHWH – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* COHORTATIVE, SINGULAR
2. Let us exalt His name – BDB 926, KB 1202, *Polel* COHORTATIVE, PLURAL

Notice how the praise is characterized.

1. At all times – this is an important reminder that YHWH is to be praised in good or difficult times; He does not change. His mercy is always present! Only our perspective changes. Faith must continue to affirm His presence and praise, cf. 1 Thess. 5:16-18.
2. Continually (BDB 556, cf. Ps. 35:27; 40:16; 70:4; 71:6) in my mouth – praise should not depend on personal circumstances but should be a normal activity of the recipients of grace.
3. Praise should rise from all people (i.e., humble, lit. “afflicted,” “poor,” or “weak,” BDB 776). All humans have much to praise God for!
4. Together – praise is both individual and corporate (i.e., together, BDB 403), as worship should be. We bring our individual needs to Him as well as our “gathered needs.” Unity and fellowship among faithful followers exhibit praise to God and witness to others!

34:2 “boast” The Hebrew VERB (BDB 237 II, KB 248, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT), in the *Hithpael* means “to boast,” “to exult,” or “to be praised” (cf. 1 Kgs. 20:11; 1 Chr. 16:10; Ps. 64:11; 105:3; 106:5; Pro. 20:14; 25:14; 27:1; Isa. 41:16; 45:25; Jer. 9:23).

For the theological concept of “boasting” see Special Topic: Boasting at Ps. 20:7.

34:3 “O magnify the LORD” This VERB (BDB 152, KB 178, *Piel* IMPERATIVE) is a command to express to God our heart’s gratefulness with our praise. Before we succumb to the frailties of life or the difficulties of current situations, we should remind ourselves of

1. who God is
2. what He has done
3. what He is doing

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:4-7

**⁴I sought the LORD, and He answered me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
⁵They looked to Him and were radiant,
And their faces will never be ashamed.
⁶This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him
And saved him out of all his troubles.
⁷The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him,
And rescues them.**

34:4-7 This strophe develops the thoughts of the first. Notice how it moves from the SINGULAR (i.e., I sought YHWH) to the PLURAL (i.e., they looked to Him), just like the first strophe.

1. For the psalmist, YHWH
 - a. answered him – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* PERFECT
 - b. delivered him from all his fears – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphal* PERFECT
2. For the group
 - a. YHWH heard, v. 6
 - b. YHWH saved the afflicted
 - c. YHWH’s angel encamped around those who fear Him (cf. Zech. 9:8; YHWH Himself in Ps. 125:2)
 - d. YHWH rescued them

3. The LXX, Syrian, Vulgate versions have “look” and “be radiant” as IMPERATIVES. The MT has PERFECTS in 34:5.

Faithful followers are never alone or isolated. Their faithful God is always present and at the ready!

34:7 “The angel of the LORD” Angels are servants of the redeemed (cf. Num. 20:16; Ps. 91:11; Isa. 63:9; Dan. 3:28; 6:22; Matt. 18:10; Acts 12:11; Heb. 1:14). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

It is obvious that deity manifests Himself physically in human form in the OT. The question for Trinitarians becomes which person of the Trinity fulfills this role. Since God the Father (YHWH) and His Spirit are consistently non-corporeal, it seems possible to suggest that these human manifestations are the pre-incarnate Messiah.

To demonstrate the difficulties one faces in trying to identify a theophany from an angelic encounter, the following list is illustrative.

1. the angel of the Lord as an angel
 - a. Gen. 24:7,40
 - b. Exod. 23:20-23; 32:34
 - c. Num. 22:22
 - d. Jdgs. 5:23
 - e. 2 Sam. 24:16
 - f. 1 Chr. 21:15-30
 - g. Zech. 1:12-13
2. the angel of the Lord as theophany
 - a. Gen. 16:7-13; 18:1-19:1; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
 - b. Exod. 3:2,4; 14:19 (13:21)
 - c. Jdgs. 2:15; 6:22-24; 13:3-23
 - d. Hosea 12:3-4
 - e. Zech. 3:1-5

▣ **“those who fear Him”** This is a *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE (BDB 431, KB 432) which describes faithful followers (cf. Ps. 15:4; 25:12,14; 31:19; 61:5; 66:16; 103:11; 118:4; Deut. 28:58; Neh. 1:11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:8-14

⁸**O taste and see that the LORD is good;**

How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

⁹**O fear the LORD, you His saints;**

For to those who fear Him there is no want.

¹⁰**The young lions do lack and suffer hunger;**

But they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing.

¹¹**Come, you children, listen to me;**

I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

¹²**Who is the man who desires life**

And loves *length of days* that he may see good?

¹³Keep your tongue from evil

And your lips from speaking deceit.

¹⁴Depart from evil and do good;

Seek peace and pursue it.

34:8-14 Because YHWH is “good” (BDB 373 II), His faithful followers (i.e., saints, BDB 872) are admonished to

1. taste – BDB 380, KB 377, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Heb. 6:5
2. see – BDB 406, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (quoted by Peter in 1 Pet. 2:3 from LXX)
3. take refuge – BDB 340, KB 337, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. fear – BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 5,6. come (BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), listen (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) to the psalmist teach the fear of YHWH, v. 11

The results of their actions are

1. there is no want, v. 9b; Ps. 23:1
2. they will not be in want of any good thing, v. 10b; Ps. 84:11
3. long life, v. 12

Here are the psalmist’s teachings for a long, happy life.

1. keep your tongue from evil and lips from speaking deceit – BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 12:3-4; 15:2-3; 73:8-9; James 3:5-12
2. depart from evil – BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 37:27; Isa. 1:16
3. do good – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 37:27; Isa. 1:17
4. seek peace – BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Mark 9:50; Rom. 14:19; 1 Cor. 7:15; 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:13; Heb. 12:14; James 3:17-18
5. pursue peace – BDB 922, KB 1191, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. same as #4

Notice the balance between what YHWH does for the faithful follower and what they must do for themselves. There are choices and consequences, both positive and negative (the next strophe is a partial list)!

Peter quotes from this Psalm in 1 Peter 3.

1. 1 Pet. 3:10 – Ps. 34:12,13
2. 1 Pet. 3:11 – Ps. 34:14
3. 1 Pet. 3:12 – Ps. 34:15-16

He sees it fitting into his emphasis of a united fellowship (i.e., “let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit, not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead,” 1 Pet. 3:8-9).

34:8 “the LORD is good” “Good” (BDB 373 II) is a key word in this strophe (cf. 1 Thess. 5:15).

1. YHWH is good (ADJECTIVE), v. 8, cf. Ps. 25:8; 86:5; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1,29; 145:9; 1 Chr. 16:34; Ezra 3:11; Jer. 33:11; Nah. 1:7
2. those who seek Him will not be in want of any good thing (BDB 481 CONSTRUCT BDB 375), v. 10, cf. Ps. 84:11
3. fear of YHWH brings a long, good (BDB 373) life, v. 12
4. depart from evil and do good (BDB 373), v. 14
5. notice the use of “good” in Romans 8:28

34:9

NASB, NKJV	“saints”
NRSV, NJB	“holy ones”
TEV	“people”
JPSOA	“consecrated ones”
REB	“holy people”

The ADJECTIVE (BDB 872) can denote

1. the Messiah, Ps. 16:3 (as David’s ultimate seed)
2. the angels or heavenly counsel, Job 5:1; 15:15; Ps. 89:5-6,7; Dan. 8:13; Zech. 14:5
3. faithful followers
 - a. priests – Num. 16:5,7; Ps. 106:16 (Aaron)
 - b. Levites – 2 Chr. 35:3
 - c. prophets – 2 Kgs. 4:9
 - d. Nazirites – Num. 6:5,8
 - e. Israel – Exod. 19:6; Lev. 11:44,45; 19:7; 20:7,26; 21:6; Num. 15:40; Deut. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19; 28:9

Here it refers to faithful followers.

34:10

NASB, NKJV,	
NRSV, NJB	“lions”
LXX, Peshitta	“rock”
REB	“princes”
NEB	“unbelievers” (from an Arabic root)

The MT has “lions.” The question is “to whom does the imagery refer?” It seems best to contrast them with “the humbled,” “the afflicted,” or “the poor” (BDB 776) of verses 2 and 6.

34:11 “children” This is literally “sons” (BDB 119). In Wisdom Literature the teacher is called “father” and the students “sons” (i.e., Pro. 1:8; 4:1,10,20; 6:1,20; 24:13,21).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:15-18

¹⁵The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous

And His ears are *open* to their cry.

¹⁶The face of the LORD is against evildoers,

To cut off the memory of them from the earth.

¹⁷The righteous cry, and the LORD hears

And delivers them out of all their troubles.

¹⁸The LORD is near to the brokenhearted

And saves those who are crushed in spirit.

34:15-18 This strophe shows the results of godly or godless living.

1. godly
 - a. YHWH’s eyes (presence and care) are toward the righteous, v. 15a
 - b. YHWH’s ears hear their cry, vv. 15b,17
 - c. YHWH delivers them out of all their trouble, v. 17b
 - d. YHWH is near to the brokenhearted, v. 18a
 - e. YHWH saves those who are crushed in spirit, v. 18b; Isa. 57:15

2. godless
 - a. YHWH's face is against evildoers, v. 16a
 - b. their memory is cut off (BDB 503, KB 500, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT), v. 16b; this imagery refers to death

There are several anthropomorphisms in this strophe using the human body to describe YHWH (see Special Topic at Ps. 2:4-6).

1. eyes
2. ears
3. face

34:18 “The LORD is near” What a wonderful promise (cf. Deut. 4:7; Ps. 119:51; 145:18). It is shocking that a holy God wants to fellowship with sinful humans. He seeks us out and pursues us. We were created by Him for fellowship with Him (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 3:8). No matter how bad things get (i.e., “the brokenhearted,” cf. Ps. 147:3; Isa. 61:1 and “those who are crushed in spirit,” cf. Ps. 51:17; Isa. 57:15), the Lord is near to faithful followers!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:19-22

- ¹⁹**Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
But the LORD delivers him out of them all.**
- ²⁰**He keeps all his bones,
Not one of them is broken.**
- ²¹**Evil shall slay the wicked,
And those who hate the righteous will be condemned.**
- ²²**The LORD redeems the soul of His servants,
And none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned.**

34:19-22 This strophe continues the emphasis of the previous one, but emphasizing the different outcomes between the godly and godless. The last two strophes are parallelism at a second level.

1. YHWH's actions toward His faithful followers
 - a. He delivers them from all their many afflictions, v. 19
 - b. He keeps all their bones unbroken (i.e., imagery for health), v. 20
 - c. He redeems (see Special Topic at Ps. 19:14) His servants, v. 22a
 - d. none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned, v. 22b
2. YHWH's actions toward the unfaithful
 - a. He shall slay the wicked, v. 21a (cf. v. 16)
 - b. those who hate the righteous will be condemned, v. 21b

34:19 There needs to be two points made about this verse.

1. The righteous did/do/will suffer in this fallen world (cf. Ps. 37:39; 50:15; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:1-3; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17,18-23; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 6:3-10; 11:23-30; Phil. 1:29; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:12-16).
2. God is with them in and through these afflictions. Sometimes He chooses to miraculously deliver but often He does not (see Special Topic at Ps. 30:2). His presence is our greatest need and promise. He knows what we are going through (cf. Exod. 3:7).

34:20 The breaking of a person's bones was an idiom for the judgment of God (cf. Ps. 51:8; Isa. 38:13; Lam. 3:4). Therefore, no bones broken was an idiom of no judgment necessary (i.e., a righteous person).

This verse is quoted in John's Gospel (cf. John 19:36, along with Zech. 12:10 in John 19:37) as a prophetic prediction. I think it is better understood as a typological understanding. Psalm 34:20 is not a prediction about the Messiah's death but about a promise of health and well being to a faithful follower.

Here is the problem, hermeneutical theory asserts that the original intent of the inspired author is the place to begin how to understand a text, in a literary and historical context. This is surely true. But we must allow NT inspired authors the right to use typology. We cannot reproduce their method because we are not inspired, but they were. So, in these cases the NT usage must be valid, but often would have been a surprise to the OT author.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who is "the angel of the LORD"? Where else is he mentioned in the Psalms?
2. How and why is verse 8 quoted twice in the NT (Heb. 6:5; 1 Pet. 2:3)?
3. Why does the author call his hearers "children"?
4. List the parts of the human body used to describe YHWH in verses 15-17.
5. What does the Hebrew idiom "keeps all his bones" mean?
6. What are the implications of verse 19 in a fallen world?
7. What does the word "soul" mean in the OT?

PSALM 35

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Rescue From Enemies	The LORD the Avenger of His People	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer For Help	Prayer of the Virtuous in Persecution
<u>MT Intro</u> "A Psalm of David."				
35:1-8	35:1-3 35:4-8	35:1-3 35:4-6 35:7-8	35:1-3 35:4-6 35:7-8	35:1-3 35:4 35:5-6 35:7-8
35:9-16	35:9-10 35:11-14 35:15-16	35:9-10 35:11-12 35:13-14 35:15-16	35:9-10 35:11-14 35:15-16	35:9-10 35:11-12 35:13-14 35:15-16
35:17-21	35:17-18 35:19-21	35:17-18 35:19-21	35:17-18 35:19 35:20-25	35:17-18 35:19 35:20-21
35:22-26	35:22-25 35:26	35:22-25 35:26	35:26	35:22-24 35:25-26
35:27-28	35:27-28	35:27-28	35:27-28	35:27 35:28

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is dominated by
 - 1. prayer requests (8 IMPERATIVES) for YHWH's help against enemies
 - 2. JUSSIVES (23) describing what the psalmist hopes will happen to those who are
 - a. his enemies
 - b. his supporters
- B. In many of the Psalms it is difficult to identify who the adversaries are. In this Psalm (i.e., 35:12-14) it is obvious they were close covenant acquaintances. This made the pain of the betrayal all the more intense! However, verses 1-8 seem to imply a military opponent.
- C. Psalm 34 and Psalm 35 are the only Psalms where "the angel of YHWH" is mentioned. This is possibly why they were placed next to each other. The Psalms were selected, edited, and compiled by unknown people in an unknown process. By faith we believe they were led by the Spirit.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:1-8

- ¹Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me;
Fight against those who fight against me.
- ²Take hold of buckler and shield
And rise up for my help.
- ³Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who pursue me;
Say to my soul, "I am your salvation."
- ⁴Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life;
Let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me.
- ⁵Let them be like chaff before the wind,
With the angel of the LORD driving *them* on.
- ⁶Let their way be dark and slippery,
With the angel of the LORD pursuing them.
- ⁷For without cause they hid their net for me;
Without cause they dug a pit for my soul.
- ⁸Let destruction come upon him unawares,
And let the net which he hid catch himself;
Into that very destruction let him fall.

35:1-8 This strophe starts out with several prayer requests (IMPERATIVES) in verses 1-3.

- 1. contend – BDB 936, KB 1224, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, the NOUN occurs in the second phrase (BDB 937)
- 2. fight – BDB 535, KB 526, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, the *Qal* PARTICIPLE occurs in the second phrase
- 3. take hold – BDB 304, KB 302, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (lit. "seize")
- 4. rise up – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 5. draw – BDB 937, KB 1227, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Exod. 15:9
- 6. MT has "close up" – BDB 688, KB 742, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (NKJV, LXX, NIV) but the same consonants can mean "battle axes" (Herodotus, NASB, NRSV, NJB, JPSOA). The UBS Text

Project gives the IMPERATIVE an “A” rating. The Hebrew consonants can be translated “battle axe,” “javelin,” “pike”; it is found only here in the OT. One wonders who the psalmist is referring to as his adversaries.

1. military combatants, vv. 1-3, 4-6
2. legal foes, v. 11
3. close friends, vv. 12-14
7. say – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE. Notice how personal this phrase is. The psalmist wants YHWH to affirm that He is his only deliverance, cf. Ps. 62:2; 89:26. If there is to be salvation/deliverance, it will come from the covenant God, YHWH!

▣ Beginning at Ps. 35:4-8 the psalmist asks YHWH to

1. let those be ashamed – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 4; Ps. 40:14; 70:2; 83:17
2. let those be dishonored – BDB 483, KB 480, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 4
3. let those be turned back – BDB 690, KB 744, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 4
4. let those be humiliated – BDB 344, KB 340, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 4
5. let them be like chaff before the wind – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 5; Job 21:18; Ps. 1:4
6. let their way be dark and slippery – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE, v. 6
7. let destruction come upon him unawares – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 8
8. let the net which he hid catch himself – BDB 539, KB 530, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 8 (typical biblical role reversal; cf. Ps. 9:15; 31:4; 140:5; 142:3)
9. let him fall on him by means of his own evil plans – BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 8

▣ These enemies are characterized as

1. who seek my life – BDB 134, KB 153, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, v. 4
2. who devise evil against me – BDB 362, KB 359, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, v. 4
3. who without cause they hid their net for me – BDB 380, KB 377, *Qal* PERFECT, v. 7
4. who without cause they dug a pit for my soul – BDB 343, KB 340, *Qal* PERFECT, v. 7 (notice this is repeated for emphasis)

35:2 “buckler and shield” These (BDB 857, KB 1037 and BDB 171, KB 545) were types of shields. BDB identifies “buckler” (BDB 857) as a large, full body shield but does not give the size of the other one. It is assumed that both were carried into battle by soldiers (and/or their armor bearers). Therefore, one was for spears and arrows (full body) and one for hand to hand fighting (smaller, BDB171; NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 846).

35:3 “pursue me” This term (BDB 922, KB 1191, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) is often used in the Psalms of aggressive adversaries (cf. Ps. 7:1,5; 31:15; 71:11; 109:16; 119:84,86). It can be

1. a military pursuit
2. a hunting pursuit
3. a metaphor of aggressive opposition

35:5-6 “the angel of the LORD” The angels were agents of protection in Ps. 34:7, but here agents of judgment. Some would say the Bible, being an ancient, pre-scientific book, is superstitious about the unseen, unexplained. It is surely true that there is mystery here, but if one holds to the Bible being the unique revelation of the one true God, then he/she must accept its worldview, which includes the

interconnection between the visible and invisible world. Exactly how, when, where, who is connected to this interconnection is uncertain.

It is often difficult to know the difference between the literary use (used for effect) and literal use (i.e., angelic intervention or activity). There are two clichés here—everything has an angelic component versus nothing has an angelic component. We live by faith and biblical revelation. Differing personalities migrate to one side or the other.

Life is often “dark” and “slippery” (cf. Ps. 73:18), but for those who trust YHWH, He walks through the valley(s) of deep darkness with them (cf. Ps. 23:4; 107:14). Life is often described in the figurative language of a walk or a journey. A straight, level, smooth road is imagery of a good life, while dark, slippery obstacles in the road or an unlevel road is imagery of a problem.

See Special Topic: The Angel of the Lord at Ps. 34:7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:9-16

⁹And my soul shall rejoice in the LORD;

It shall exult in His salvation.

¹⁰All my bones will say, “LORD, who is like You,

Who delivers the afflicted from him who is too strong for him,

And the afflicted and the needy from him who robs him?”

¹¹Malicious witnesses rise up;

They ask me of things that I do not know.

¹²They repay me evil for good,

To the bereavement of my soul.

¹³But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth;

I humbled my soul with fasting,

And my prayer kept returning to my bosom.

¹⁴I went about as though it were my friend or brother;

I bowed down mourning, as one who sorrows for a mother.

¹⁵But at my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered themselves together;

The smiters whom I did not know gathered together against me,

They slandered me without ceasing.

¹⁶Like godless jesters at a feast,

They gnashed at me with their teeth.

35:9-16 This strophe affirms YHWH’s deliverance.

1. my soul shall rejoice in the Lord – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. it shall exult in His salvation – BDB 965, KB 1314, *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. all his bones (i.e., his soul, cf. Ps. 51:8) will say – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT (i.e., the terms “soul,” *nephesh* [BDB 659], and “bones” are idioms for the whole person, cf. Ps. 6:2)
 - a. who is like You, cf. Exod. 15:11; Ps. 86:8, Micah 7:18; see Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7
 - b. who delivers the afflicted

At this point (35:11) the psalmist begins to describe his adversaries.

1. malicious witnesses – BDB 729 CONSTRUCT BDB 329, v. 11
2. who asks him things he does not know, v. 11 (the setting is a court scene and the false witnesses are asking about things the psalmist did not do)

3. who repay evil for good, v. 12, cf. Ps. 38:20; 109:5 (reversal, cf. vv. 13-14)
4. who rejoiced at his stumbling, v. 15
5. who gathered together to slander him, v. 15
6. who gnashed their teeth at him, v. 15, cf. Ps. 37:12; 112:10; Job 16:9; Lam. 2:16; Matt. 8:12; 25:30; Luke 13:28

In Ps. 35:14 and 15 the psalmist describes what he did for those who persecuted him

1. when they were sick, he wore sackcloth on their behalf (see Special Topic: Grieving Rites at Ps. 30:11)
2. he humbled himself, fasted, and prayed on their behalf
3. he mourned for them (as for a close friend or brother)
4. he mourned for them (as for his own mother)

There is a visible contrast between how the faithful follower acts and the faithless ones act! Our relationship with God is clearly seen in how we treat others.

35:12b The MT has “bereavement” (BDB 1013) from loss of children which is a terrible sorrow. The NEB suggests an emendation, “they seek for my life”; REB, “lying in wait to take my life.”

As is so often true, modern readers do not fully understand the poetry of an ANE culture. However, though there are rare words and uncertain imagery, the overall thrust is understandable from context, especially parallelism.

35:13b

NASB, LXX	“and my prayer kept returning to my bosom”
JPSOA	“may what I prayed for happen to me”
NRSV, TEV	“I prayed with a bowed head on my bosom”
NJB	“praying ever anew in my heart”

The MT is uncertain. So the translations suggest

1. the psalmist’s prayers and actions for his enemies in 35:13-14 return to his benefit, not theirs (cf. Matt. 10:13; Luke 10:6)
2. the phrase refers to his body’s position in prayer
3. the phrase refers to repeated prayer

35:15

NASB, NRSV,	
NJB, JPSOA,	
REB	“stumbling”
NKJV, TEV	“adversity”
NEB	“ruffians”

The MT has “at my stumbling” (BDB 854, cf. Ps. 38:17; Job 18:12). The UBS Text Project gives the MT a “C” rating (considerable doubt). It suggests “limping ones,” denoting a hurt psalmist (p. 220). The UBS *Handbook* (p. 335) suggests the psalmist was limping like a wounded animal. If so the “gathered together” could be like a pack of dogs.

35:16

NASB	“like godless jesters at a feast”
NKJV	“with ungodly mockers at feasts”
NRSV	“they impiously mock more and more”
TEV	“like those who would mock a cripple”
NJB	“if I fall they surround me”

REB “when I slipped, they mocked at me”
JPSOA “with impious, mocking grimace”

The MT has “like the profanest of mockers of a cake,” which obviously does not make sense. So English translations have tried to find a parallel between verse 15 and verse 16, but it is all conjecture. The AB (p. 214) suggests an emendation that results in “my encircling mockers.”

The MT is not the first or oldest Hebrew manuscript.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:17-21

¹⁷**LORD, how long will You look on?**

Rescue my soul from their ravages,

My only *life* from the lions.

¹⁸**I will give You thanks in the great congregation;**

I will praise You among a mighty throng.

¹⁹**Do not let those who are wrongfully my enemies rejoice over me;**

Nor let those who hate me without cause wink maliciously.

²⁰**For they do not speak peace,**

But they devise deceitful words against those who are quiet in the land.

²¹**They opened their mouth wide against me;**

They said, “Aha, aha, our eyes have seen it!”

35:17-21 Unlike the previous strophe, this one starts out asking YHWH why and then a prayer for action.

1. how long will You not act – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT (same sentiment as Ps. 13:1-2; 22:1-2; Hab. 1:2-4; YHWH does not respond as the psalmist thinks He should)
2. rescue (lit. “bring back”) my soul – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

Verse 18 describes what the psalmist will do if YHWH rescues him.

1. I will give You thanks in the great congregation (temple gathering, cf. Ps. 22:25; 40:9,10) – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. I will praise You among the mighty throng (synonymous parallelism with #1) – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

Verse 19 returns to the “let those. . .” pattern of vv. 5-8.

1. do not let those who are wrongfully my enemies rejoice over me – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. neither let those who hate me without cause wink maliciously – BDB 902, KB 1147, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Pro. 6:12-14; 10:10

Ps. 35:20-21 gives the reasons why YHWH should act against his adversaries.

1. they do not speak peace
2. they devise deceitful words
3. they opened their mouth wide against me
4. they say, “Aha, aha, our eyes have seen it”

35:14 Jesus quotes part of this verse in John 15:25 as referring to Him in a typological sense.

35:17 “lions” See note at Psalm 34:10.

35:20 “those who are quiet in the land” This phrase is unique. From its parallel it seems to refer to people who do not cause trouble but seek peace.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:22-26

- ²²You have seen it, O LORD, do not keep silent;
O LORD, do not be far from me.
²³Stir up Yourself, and awake to my right
And to my cause, my God and my LORD.
²⁴Judge me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness,
And do not let them rejoice over me.
²⁵Do not let them say in their heart, “Aha, our desire!”
Do not let them say, “We have swallowed him up!”
²⁶Let those be ashamed and humiliated altogether who rejoice at my distress;
Let those be clothed with shame and dishonor who magnify themselves over me.

35:22-26 The psalmist appeals to YHWH’s knowledge of the situation (cf. Ps. 10:14; 32:8; 33:18; 34:15; Exod. 3:7). In light of His knowledge of the enemies’ attack, please

1. do not keep silent – BDB 361, KB 357, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 28:1; 39:12; 83:1; 109:1; also note Hab. 1:13
2. do not be far from me – BDB 934, KB 1221, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 10:1; 22:11; 38:21; 71:12

These JUSSIVES are followed by three specific prayer requests (IMPERATIVES) for court justice (i.e., “right,” “cause”).

1. stir up Yourself – BDB 734, KB 802, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 7:6; 44:23; 59:4; 80:2
2. awake – BDB 884, KB 1098, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. judge – BDB 1047, KB 1622, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 26:1; 43:1; 139:1,23; notice the judgment is “according to Your righteousness” (cf. 31:1c; Romans 4-6; Galatians 3)

In the following verses (35:24b-26) there is another series of six *Qal* IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense.

1. do not let them rejoice over me – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 24
2. do not let them say in their hearts, “Aha, our desire!” – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 25
3. do not let them say, “We have swallowed him up!” – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 25
4. let them be ashamed – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 26
5. let them be humiliated – BDB 344, KB 340, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 26
6. let those be clothed with shame and dishonor – BDB 344, KB 340, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 26

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:27-28

- ²⁷Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favor my vindication;
And let them say continually, “The LORD be magnified,
Who delights in the prosperity of His servant.”
²⁸And my tongue shall declare Your righteousness
And Your praise all day long.

35:27-28 Again there is a series of four *Qal* IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense.

1. let them who favor my vindication (cf. 35:24a) shout for joy – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 27
2. let them rejoice (parallel to #1) – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 27
3. let them say continuously – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 27
4. let the Lord be magnified – BDB 152, KB 178, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 27

35:28 The tongue of the faithless spreads lies, rumors, and bitterness but the tongue of the faithful follower tells of

1. the righteousness of YHWH, cf. Ps. 51:14; 71:15,24
2. His praise

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How does this Psalm use the imagery of YHWH as warrior?
2. List the things that the psalmist asks YHWH to do to his enemies in verses 4-8 and again in verses 24b-26.
3. What doctrine does the phrase “who is like You” (v. 10) imply?
4. Why does the psalmist feel betrayed by his acquaintances? (cf. vv. 13-14)
5. What do the words, “Aha, aha” (cf. vv. 21,25) imply?
6. List the good things the psalmist asks for his supporters in v. 27.

PSALM 36

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Wickedness of Men and Lovingkindness of God	Man's Wickedness and God's Perfection	A Psalm of Mixed Type	Human Wickedness	The Perversity of Sinners and the Benevolence of God
<u>MT Intro</u> "For the Choir Director. A <i>Psalm</i> of David the Servant of the LORD"				
36:1-4	36:1-4	36:1-4	36:1-4	36:1
				36:2-3a
			The Goodness of God	36:3b-6a
36:5-9	36:5-9	36:5-6	36:5-6	
		36:7-9	36:7-9	
				36:6c-7
				36:8-9
36:10-12	36:10-12	36:10-12	36:10-12	36:10-11
				36:12

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm describes the ungodly person in vv. 1-4 and then the faithful follower in vv. 7-9.
- B. YHWH is described in vv. 5-6 by four powerful descriptive NOUNS.
 - 1. lovingkindness
 - 2. faithfulness
 - 3. righteousness
 - 4. judgments/justiceThey describe YHWH and His covenant. These are how He wants His world to function!
- C. Verses 10-12 offer concluding prayers for YHWH to help shield the godly from the influences of the godless. The downward pull of a
 - 1. fallen world (cf. Eph. 2:1)
 - 2. fallen culture
 - 3. fallen acquaintances (cf. 1 Cor. 15:33)
 - 4. fallen self (cf. Eph. 2:3)
 - 5. Eph. 4:2 would also add Satan (i.e., the prince of the power of the air) who is often so strong, consistent, and pervasive. YHWH's character, word, and intervention are our only hope.
- D. Two unique word usages are found in this Psalm.
 - 1. evil personified (i.e., "transgression speaks"), v. 1
 - 2. "house" refers to all creation or eschatological setting. See note at vv. 8-9.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:1-4

- ¹Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart;
There is no fear of God before his eyes.
- ²For it flatters him in his *own* eyes
Concerning the discovery of his iniquity *and* the hatred *of it*.
- ³The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit;
He has ceased to be wise *and* to do good.
- ⁴He plans wickedness upon his bed;
He sets himself on a path that is not good;
He does not despise evil.

36:1-4 These verses describe the ungodly (BDB 957).

- 1. Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his (LXX, MT, "my") heart (BDB 833 calls this "personified as evil spirit"). The VERB of transgression/rebellion is used in Ps. 37:38; 51:13; Isa. 43:27; 59:13; 66:24; Jer. 2:8,29; 3:13; 33:8, where it refers to transgression/rebellion among the covenant people. The psalmist lives among a people of unclean lips (cf. Isa. 6:5,9-10).
- 2. There is no fear (i.e., terror, BDB 808) of God before their eyes. Fear of YHWH is admonished in Ps. 34:9; 55:19d. This verse is the concluding text quoted in the list of OT texts which assert the universal sinfulness of all mankind in Rom. 3:18.

3. Either “personified transgression” or the godless person himself lies (“smooth talk,” BDB 325, KB 322, *Hiphil* PERFECT) to himself about his own iniquity.
4. The words of his mouth (which reflects who he is) are
 - a. wickedness (BDB 19)
 - b. deceit (BDB 941)
5. He has ceased to
 - a. be wise (BDB 968, KB 1328, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
 - b. do good (BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
6. He plans wickedness upon his bed (all the VERBS of 36:4 are IMPERFECTS, denoting ongoing action), cf. Pro. 4:16; Micah 2:1.
7. He set himself on a path that is not good. Remember life is characterized as a path, road, way. Each of us must choose which path, cf. Deut. 30:15,19; Matt. 7:13-14.
8. He does not despise evil.

Even covenant people are tested/tempted (i.e., personified rebellion) but they are still responsible for their choices and the consequences of those choices!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:5-9

- ⁵Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
Your faithfulness *reaches* to the skies.**
- ⁶Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Your judgments are *like* a great deep.
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.**
- ⁷How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.**
- ⁸They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.**
- ⁹For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light.**

36:5-9 This strophe describes YHWH’s character and actions toward His people. As the rebel chose and lived in light of his/her choices, so too, the faithful followers must continue to respond to YHWH’s love.

1. YHWH is described as, vv. 5-6
 - a. lovingkindness (BDB 338, i.e., covenant loyalty, see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7)
 - b. faithfulness (BDB 53, see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1)
 - c. righteousness (BDB 842, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5)
 - d. judgments (BDB 1048, see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5-6)

These are four powerful, recurrent attributes of YHWH. They characterize His dealings with humans. In light of these attributes humans and all life on this planet is preserved (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERFECTS). *Elohim* created and sustains this planet, its people, its animals, and its plant life (see Special Topic: Names for Deity at Ps. 1:1).
2. Faithful followers
 - a. take refuge in the shadow of Your wings (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12)
 - b. drink their fill of the abundance of Your house (see Contextual Insights, D or note at 36:8)
 - c. have Your house as
 - (1) the fountain of life, cf. Jer. 2:13; 17:13
 - (2) light (i.e., truth, health, joy, cf. 18:28; 27:1)

36:7 “O God! And the children of men” It is possible that “God” (*Elohim*) here should/could refer to “leaders,” because it seems to parallel “man and beasts” (i.e., a category of two) in 36:6c. If so, then the two categories of humans referred to must be

1. leaders (i.e., judges in Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6 or leaders in Ps. 29:1; 58:1)
2. those led

NEB, REB, TEV, and AB footnote have “Gods and men.”

36:8 “Your house” In this context it does not refer to the temple but a recreated Eden (i.e., “delight,” BDB 726, v. 8b) or eschatological setting (i.e., new age, cf. Ps. 46:4; Ezek. 47:1-12; Joel 3:18; Rev. 22:1-2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:10-12

¹⁰**O continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You,**

And Your righteousness to the upright in heart.

¹¹**Let not the foot of pride come upon me,**

And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.

¹²**There the doers of iniquity have fallen;**

They have been thrust down and cannot rise.

36:10-12 This concluding strophe is a prayer by the psalmist to YHWH on behalf of the faithful followers (i.e., “to those who know You,” see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6).

1. Continue – BDB 604, KB 645, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - a. in Your lovingkindness
 - b. in Your righteousness
2. Do not let
 - a. the foot of pride come upon me – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - b. the hand of the wicked drive me away – BDB 626, KB 678, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. Let the wicked be
 - a. fallen – BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* PERFECT
 - b. thrust down – BDB 190, KB 218, *Qal* PERFECT
 - c. unable to rise – BDB 407, KB 410, *Qal* PERFECT (all three VERBS may refer to death and descent into *Sheol*)

Note the consequences of faith (36:7-8) and evil (36:11-12). Choices have consequences!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Compare all the translations that you have and note the different ways they translate verse 1.
2. Express in your own words the essence of verses 1-4 in one declarative sentence.
3. What do the four significant terms in vv. 5,6 have to say about the concept of conditional and unconditional covenants in the OT?
4. Can the term *Elohim* in verse 7 refer to the judges or leaders of Israel as well as the God of Israel? Why?
5. Why does the term “in the shadow of Your wings” refer to God as a female? What is the implication of these types of statements?
6. Does it seem unspiritual to you that David prays for the destruction of his enemies?

PSALM 37

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Security of Those Who Trust in the LORD, and Insecurity of the Wicked	The Heritage of the Righteous and the Calamity of the Wicked	The Certainty of Retribution For the Wicked (A Wisdom Psalm)	The Destiny of the Wicked and of the Good	The Fate of the Upright and the Wicked (An Acrostic)
<u>MT Intro</u> <i>A Psalm of David</i>				
37:1-6	37:1-2	37:1-2	3:1-2	37:1-2 (<i>Aleph</i>)
	37:3-4	37:3-4	37:3-4	37:3-4 (<i>Bet</i>)
	37:5-6	37:5-6	37:5-6	37:5-6 (<i>Gimel</i>)
37:7-11	37:7-11	37:7	37:7	37:7 (<i>Dalet</i>)
		37:8-9	37:8-9	37:8-9 (<i>He</i>)
		37:10-11	37:10-11	37:10-11 (<i>Waw</i>)
37:12-15	37:12-15	37:12-13	37:12-13	37:12-13 (<i>Zain</i>)
		37:14-15	37:14-15	37:14-15 (<i>Het</i>)
37:16-22	37:16-17	37:16-17	37:16-17	37:16-17 (<i>Tet</i>)
	37:18-20	37:18-19	37:18-20	37:18-19 (<i>Yod</i>)
		37:20		37:20 (<i>Kaph</i>)
	37:21-22	37:21-22	37:21-22	37:21-22 (<i>Lamed</i>)
37:23-26	37:23-24	37:23-24	37:23-24	37:23-24 (<i>Mem</i>)
	37:25-26	37:25-26	37:25-26	37:25-26 (<i>Nun</i>)
37:27-34	37:27-29	37:27-29	37:27-29	37:27-28b (<i>Samek</i>)
				37:28c-29 (<i>Ain</i>)
	37:30-31	37:30-31	37:30-31	37:30-31 (<i>Pe</i>)
	37:32-33	37:32-33	37:32-33	37:32-33 (<i>Zade</i>)
	37:34-36	37:34	37:34	37:34 (<i>Qoph</i>)
		37:35-36	37:35-36	37:35-36 (<i>Resh</i>)
37:35-40				
	37:37-38	37:37-38	37:37-38	37:37-38 (<i>Shim</i>)
	37:39-40	37:39-40	37:39-40	37:39-40 (<i>Taw</i>)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm swings back and forth between admonishing and describing the faithful followers and describing the faithless. The theological issue is the prosperity of the wicked (cf. Psalm 73; Habakkuk).
- B. YHWH is characterized in several different ways. He sustains the faithful and destroys the faithless.
- C. This is an acrostic psalm. Each suggestive letter has two verses (i.e., 4 lines) except *Qoph*, 37:34, which has 3 lines.
- D. This Psalm's theology about inheriting the land (i.e., Canaan) and prosperity is based on Gen. 12:1-3 (YHWH's initial call and promises to Abraham), which develops under Moses into the Mosaic covenant. It had blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30 for a good summary).

YHWH wanted to reveal Himself to the world through His special covenant people, Israel. Israel was to reveal His grace, mercy, and love through its prosperity and godly culture. As is obvious from the historical books (i.e., Joshua – 2 Kings), the disobedience of Israel thwarted this purpose. Israel was judged and the covenant broken (i.e., exile). Therefore, YHWH was forced to start a "new covenant" (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) based on His grace and actions, not fallen human obedience (i.e., the gospel of Jesus Christ recorded in the NT). With this new covenant the promises to national Israel were annulled! Below I have placed a Special Topic that tries to document this change.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY ARE THE END-TIME EVENTS SO CONTROVERSIAL?

Through the years of my study of eschatology I have learned that most Christians do not have or want a developed, systematized, end-time chronology. There are some Christians who focus or major on this area of Christianity for theological, psychological, or denominational reasons. These Christians seem to become obsessed with how it will all end, and somehow miss the urgency of the gospel! Believers cannot affect God's eschatological (end-time) agenda, but they can participate in the gospel mandate (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Most believers affirm a Second Coming of Christ and an end-time culmination of the promises of God. The interpretive problems arising from how to understand this temporal culmination come from several biblical paradoxes.

1. the tension between Old Covenant prophetic models and New Covenant apostolic models
2. the tension between the Bible's monotheism (one God for all) and the election of Israel (a special people)
3. the tension between the conditional aspect of biblical covenants and promises ("if. . . then") and the unconditional faithfulness of God to fallen mankind's redemption
4. the tension between Near Eastern literary genres and modern western literary models
5. the tension between the Kingdom of God as present, yet future
6. the tension between belief in the imminent return of Christ and the belief that some events must happen first.

Let us discuss these tensions one at a time.

FIRST TENSION (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world.

1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezekiel 37-39; Daniel 7-12; Zechariah)
3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
5. the writings of Paul (cf. 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 5; 1 Thessalonians 4-5; 2 Thessalonians 2)
6. the writings of John (1 John and Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope ("the mystery of Christ," cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13. See Special Topic at 10:7). Here are some relevant examples:

1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion), but is projected into the NT as a term expressing God's acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God's promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15, before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham's call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).
2. In the OT the enemies of God's people are the surrounding nations of the Ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7,15; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Revelation 21-22).

4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are
 - a. the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
 - b. the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in 2 Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14)
 - c. the temple is now Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21) and through Him the local church (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19)
 - d. even Israel and its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., "Israel," cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., "kingdom of priests," cf. 1 Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus' or Paul's eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions in describing the end instead of the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John's way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God's commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome (cf. Rev. 1:7).

SECOND TENSION (monotheism vs. an elect people)

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God (cf. Exod. 8:10; Isa. 44:24; 45:5-7, 14, 18, 21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7). The OT's uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God's love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Genesis 3). God's love and purpose was so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God's election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God's call of Abraham involved the intentional blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God, never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-59; Matt. 3:9), but by personal faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6, quoted in Romans 4). Israel lost her mission (the church is now a kingdom of priests, cf. Rev. 1:6; 2 Pet. 2:5, 9), turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

THIRD TENSION (conditional covenants vs. unconditional covenants)

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God's redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). However, the mandated human response is always conditional!

The “if. . . then” pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one “horn of the dilemma,” God’s faithfulness or human effort, God’s sovereignty or mankind’s free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God’s OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it! God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isaiah 53), not Israel! God’s ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God’s covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Acts 7 and Galatians 3).

The world mission of gospel proclamation has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is still a conditional covenant! This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Romans 9-11). There may be a place and purpose for end-time, believing Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

FOURTH TENSION (Near Eastern literary models vs. western models)

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture’s literary models. It focuses on people, encounters, and events more than succinct propositional truths. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than was intended by the original author as it is to make it say less than what he intended! Interpreters’ arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation of Revelation. My concern is to hear and deal with the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible’s eastern mind-set presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre. An historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood. In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the symbols of the book. Revelation’s initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God’s control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms God’s love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the birth, life, and death of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillments of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13; and Luke 21) and Paul (cf. 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4-5; and 2 Thessalonians 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and

dogmatism are all inappropriate. Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I. Howard Marshall:

"Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)" (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book *Biblical Interpretations* said:

"No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books' frame of reference is the reader's contemporary age rather than the author's. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text. . . First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes" (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost and Longman III:

"Today's readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine 'what will happen when,' thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message" (p. 35).

FIFTH TENSION (the Kingdom of God as present yet future)

The kingdom of God is present, yet future. This theological paradox becomes focused at the point of eschatology. If one expects a literal fulfillment of all OT prophecies to Israel then the Kingdom becomes mostly a restoration of Israel to a geographical locality and a theological pre-eminence! This would necessitate that the Church is secretly raptured out at chapter 5 and the remaining chapters relate to Israel (but note Rev. 22:16).

However, if the focus is on the kingdom being inaugurated by the promised OT Messiah, then it is present with Christ's first coming, and then the focus becomes the incarnation, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ. The theological emphasis is on a current salvation. The kingdom has come, the OT is fulfilled in Christ's offer of salvation to all, not His millennial reign over some!

It is surely true that the Bible speaks of both of Christ's comings, but where is the emphasis to be placed? It seems to me that most OT prophecies focus on the first coming, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (cf. Daniel 2). In many ways this is analogous to the eternal reign of God (cf. Daniel

7). In the OT the focus is on the eternal reign of God, yet the mechanism for that reign's manifestation is the ministry of the Messiah (cf. 1 Cor. 15:26-27). It is not a question of which is true; both are true, but where is the emphasis? It must be said that some interpreters become so focused on the millennial reign of the Messiah (cf. Revelation 20) that they have missed the biblical focus on the eternal reign of the Father. Christ's reign is a preliminary event. As the two comings of Christ were not obvious in the OT, neither is a temporal reign of the Messiah!

The key to Jesus' preaching and teaching is the kingdom of God. It is both present (in salvation and service), and future (in pervasiveness and power). Revelation, if it focuses on a Messianic millennial reign (cf. Revelation 20), is preliminary, not ultimate (cf. Revelation 21-22). It is not obvious from the OT that a temporal reign is necessary; as a matter of fact, the Messianic reign of Daniel 7 is eternal, not millennial.

SIXTH TENSION (imminent return of Christ vs. the delayed *Parousia*)

Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30; Rev. 1:1,3; 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,10,12,20). But every expectant generation of believers so far has been wrong! The soonness (immediacy) of Jesus' return is a powerful promised hope of every generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He were coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) if He tarries.

Some passages in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:2; 18:8) and I and 2 Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events that must happen first:

1. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10)
2. the revelation of "the man of Sin" (cf. Matt. 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2; Revelation 13)
3. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Revelation 13)

There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live every day as if it were your last but plan and train for future ministry!

CONSISTENCY AND BALANCE

It must be said that the different schools of modern eschatological interpretation all contain half truths. They explain and interpret well some texts. The problem lies in consistency and balance. Often there is a set of presuppositions which use the biblical text to fill in the pre-set theological skeleton. The Bible does not reveal a logical, chronological, systematic eschatology. It is like a family album. The pictures are true, but not always in order, in context, in a logical sequence. Some of the pictures have fallen out of the album and later generations of family members do not know exactly how to put them back. The key to proper interpretation of Revelation is the intent of the original author as revealed in his choice of literary genre. Most interpreters try to carry their exegetical tools and procedures from other genres of the NT into their interpretations of Revelation. They focus on the OT instead of allowing the teachings of Jesus and Paul to set the theological structure and let Revelation act as illustrative.

I must admit that I approach this commentary on Revelation with some fear and trepidation, not because of the curse of Rev. 22:18-19, but because of the level of controversy the interpretation of this book has caused and continues to cause among God's people. I love God's revelation. It is true when all men are liars (cf. Rom. 3:4)! Please use this commentary as an attempt to be thought provoking and not definitive, as a sign post and not a road map, as a "what if," not a "thus says the Lord." I have come face to face with my own inadequacies, biases, and theological agenda. I have also seen those of other interpreters. It almost seems that people find in Revelation what they expect to find. The genre lends itself to abuse! However, it is in the Bible for a purpose. Its placement as the concluding "word" is not by accident. It has a message from God to His children of each and every generation. God wants us to understand! Let us join hands, not form camps; let us affirm what is clear and central, not all that may be, might be, could be true. God help us all!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:1-6

- ¹**Do not fret because of evildoers,
Be not envious toward wrongdoers.**
²**For they will wither quickly like the grass
And fade like the green herb.**
³**Trust in the LORD and do good;
Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.**
⁴**Delight yourself in the LORD;
And He will give you the desires of your heart.**
⁵**Commit your way to the LORD,
Trust also in Him, and He will do it.**
⁶**He will bring forth your righteousness as the light
And your judgment as the noonday.**

37:1-6 This strophe has seven IMPERATIVES and three JUSSIVES. These are not prayers but admonitions to the faithful (i.e., what to do and what not to do).

1. fret not yourself – BDB 354, KB 351, *Hithpael* JUSSIVE, same form in vv. 7,8; note Pro. 24:19; the word means “burn,” or “be kindled” and is used figuratively of anger; here it is paired with “envy” (BDB 888)
2. do not be envious – BDB 888, KB 1109, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 73:3; Pro. 3:31; 23:17; 24:1,19

The lives of the wicked look successful and happy but they are short lived; they will not ultimately inherit the promised land.

1. they will wither quickly like the grass – BDB 576, KB 593, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Job 14:2; Ps. 90:5-6; 103:15-16; Isa. 40:6-8
2. they will fade like the green herb – BDB 615, KB 663, *Qal* IMPERFECT

In light of the transitoriness of the faithless ones, faithful followers should (37:3-5 has 7 IMPERATIVES)

1. trust in YHWH – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. vv. 3,5; Ps. 52:8; 62:8; Pro. 3:5-6
2. do good – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. dwell in the land – BDB 1014, KB 1496, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. cultivate faithfulness – BDB 944, KB 1258, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. delight yourself in YHWH – BDB 772, KB 851, *Hithpael* IMPERATIVE (i.e., not in physical prosperity)
6. commit your way (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:2) to YHWH – BDB 164, KB 193, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
7. trust in Him – BDB same as #1

YHWH will

1. give (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT) the faithful follower “the desires of your heart,” v. 4
2. “He will do it” (BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERFECT), v. 5
3. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light
4. He will bring forth your justice as the noonday (#3 and #4 are parallel and seem to refer to a court case or is figurative of end-time judgment)

37:4b This line of poetry has always meant a lot to me personally, but I am not sure I have interpreted it correctly. I usually use this to assert that if we are faithful followers we will desire the right things because YHWH has informed our hearts (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27). But it surely could refer to the

answered prayers of the faithful follower (cf. Ps. 20:4-5; 21:2; 145:19; Matt. 7:7-8). The theological issue is the interplay between God's sovereignty and human freewill (see Special Topic at Ps. 25:12; NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 444). Sometimes careful exegesis ruins a good sermon!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:7-11

- ⁷Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him;
Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,
Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.**
- ⁸Cease from anger and forsake wrath;
Do not fret; *it leads* only to evildoing.**
- ⁹For evildoers will be cut off,
But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land.**
- ¹⁰Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more;
And you will look carefully for his place and he will not be *there*.**
- ¹¹But the humble will inherit the land
And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.**

37:7-11 This is a continuation of the previous strophe.

1. admonitions to the faithful
 - a. rest in YHWH – BDB 198, KB 226, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. wait patiently for Him – BDB 296, KB 297, *Hithpolel* IMPERATIVE (i.e., for YHWH to act temporally and eschatologically)
 - c. fret not – same as 37:1
 - d. cease from anger – BDB 951, KB 1276, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (i.e., do not try to avenge yourself)
 - e. forsake wrath – BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - f. fret not – same as 37:1,7
2. because the fate of the faithless is sure
 - a. his prosperity will be cut off (i.e., death)
 - b. the wicked will have no place (like wild flowers out of season)
3. therefore, the faithful (i.e., those who wait for YHWH, v. 9b)
 - a. will inherit the land, cf. 37:9,11,22,29,34, see note D. in Contextual Insights; and Special Topic at Ps. 1:2)
 - b. will delight themselves in abundant prosperity

37:7 “wait patiently” The MT has the VERB (BDB 296 I, KB 297), literally “whirl,” “dance,” “writhe” (i.e., in pain). It is used in the sense of “waiting” in Job 35:14 (*Polel*). Only here in Ps. 37:7 (*Hithpolel*) does it mean “wait patiently.” Because of this the NET Bible (cf. p. 895, #9) has suggested an emendation to a different Hebrew root (i.e., from חיל to יחל, BDB 403, *Hiphil*).

37:8 Here again is the recurrent OT emphasis of God's sovereignty and foreknowledge (cf. 37:23). All history is present before Him. Faithful followers can trust that

1. the past is forgiven
2. the present is empowered
3. the future is secure

37:10 “Yet a little while” This is Hebrew imagery for predestined occurrences. YHWH is in control of time. There is a plan, purpose, and just outcome. Righteousness will be victorious in the end and wickedness will be exposed, judged, and eliminated (cf. 37:13)!

37:11 “the humble will inherit the land” This is quoted by Jesus in the beatitude of Matt. 5:5 (LXX), where “land” has turned into “earth” (see Contextual Insights).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:12-15

¹²**The wicked plots against the righteous**

And gnashes at him with his teeth.

¹³**The LORD laughs at him,**

For He sees his day is coming.

¹⁴**The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow**

To cast down the afflicted and the needy,

To slay those who are upright in conduct.

¹⁵**Their sword will enter their own heart,**

And their bows will be broken.

37:12-15 The wicked’s actions against the faithful and YHWH’s response.

1. the wicked
 - a. plot against the righteous
 - b. gnash (their teeth) at him/them, cf. Job 16:9; Ps. 35:11; Lam. 2:16; Acts 7:54
 - c. have drawn the swords
 - d. have bent their bows
 - (1) to cast down the afflicted
 - (2) to cast down the needy
 - (3) to slay the upright
2. YHWH’s response
 - a. He laughs at him/them, cf. Ps. 2:4; 59:9
 - b. He sees his/their day (i.e., of judgment) coming, both temporal and eschatological
 - c. their sword will be broken (reversal by YHWH)
 - d. their bow will be broken (reversal by YHWH)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:16-22

¹⁶**Better is the little of the righteous**

Than the abundance of many wicked.

¹⁷**For the arms of the wicked will be broken,**

But the LORD sustains the righteous.

¹⁸**The LORD knows the days of the blameless,**

And their inheritance will be forever.

¹⁹**They will not be ashamed in the time of evil,**

And in the days of famine they will have abundance.

²⁰**But the wicked will perish;**

And the enemies of the LORD will be like the glory of the pastures,

They vanish— like smoke they vanish away.

**²¹The wicked borrows and does not pay back,
But the righteous is gracious and gives.
²²For those blessed by Him will inherit the land,
But those cursed by Him will be cut off.**

37:16-22 This strophe is a series of contrasts (antithetical parallelism).

1. Verse 16
 - a. better is the little of the righteous (cf. Pro. 15:16-17; 16:8; 28:6; this is the theological balance to 37:25)
 - b. than the abundance of many wicked (i.e., do not fret over the seeming prosperity of the wicked, 37:1-2)
2. Verse 17
 - a. the arms of the wicked will be broken
 - b. YHWH sustains the righteous
3. Verses 18-20
 - a. the blameless, vv. 18-19
 - (1) YHWH knows their day
 - (2) their inheritance will be forever
 - (3) they will not be ashamed in the time of evil
 - (4) in the days of famine, they will have abundance
 - b. the wicked
 - (1) will perish
 - (2) will vanish away (MT uncertain, context suggests, like spring flowers, cf. v. 2)
4. Verse 21
 - a. the wicked borrows and does not pay back
 - b. the righteous is gracious and gives
5. Verse 22
 - a. those blessed by YHWH will inherit the land
 - b. those cursed by YHWH will be cut off

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:23-26

**²³The steps of a man are established by the LORD,
And He delights in his way.
²⁴When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong,
Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand.
²⁵I have been young and now I am old,
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
Or his descendants begging bread.
²⁶All day long he is gracious and lends,
And his descendants are a blessing.**

37:23-26 This strophe describes the faithful follower(s).

1. his/her steps are established by YHWH
2. YHWH delights in his/her way
3. when he/she falls
 - a. not hurled headlong (i.e., figurative of destruction)

- b. because YHWH holds his/her hand (saints do falter from time to time but YHWH does not)
- 4. psalmist (with the experiences of a lifetime) has never seen the righteous forsaken
- 5. psalmist has never seen their descendants begging bread
- 6. he/she is gracious and lends
- 7. his/her descendants are a blessing

37:25 This is an OT perspective based on the Mosaic covenant (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30). This is not meant to be interpreted today that all poor and needy people can not be believers. The covenants have changed, see Contextual Insights D. For a good brief discussion of this verse, see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 267-268.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:27-34

- ²⁷Depart from evil and do good,
So you will abide forever.**
- ²⁸For the LORD loves justice
And does not forsake His godly ones;
They are preserved forever,
But the descendants of the wicked will be cut off.**
- ²⁹The righteous will inherit the land
And dwell in it forever.**
- ³⁰The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom,
And his tongue speaks justice.**
- ³¹The law of his God is in his heart;
His steps do not slip.**
- ³²The wicked spies upon the righteous
And seeks to kill him.**
- ³³The LORD will not leave him in his hand
Or let him be condemned when he is judged.**
- ³⁴Wait for the LORD and keep His way,
And He will exalt you to inherit the land;
When the wicked are cut off, you will see it.**

37:27-34 This strophe, like vv. 1-6, has several IMPERATIVES (6) admonishing the faithful. This is another strophe describing the actions of the faithful followers.

- 1. admonishments (i.e., IMPERATIVES)
 - a. depart from evil, v. 27 – BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. do good, v. 27 – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 37:3
 - c. dwell forever, v. 27 – BDB 1014, KB 1496, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 37:18,29
 - d. wait for YHWH, v. 34 – BDB 875, KB 1082, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. 37:9
 - e. keep His way, v. 34 – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. reasons for the admonishments
 - a. YHWH loves justice
 - b. YHWH does not forsake His godly ones
 - c. they are preserved forever
 - d. they will inherit the land

- e. they will dwell in the land forever
- f. they speak wisdom/justice
- g. they/he have the law of God in their/his hearts
- h. his foot does not slip
- i. YHWH will not desert him/them
- j. he/they will not be condemned in judgment

Being a covenant believer changes every aspect of one's life, motives, and hopes. There is a radical difference between the faithful follower and the faithless person. The faithless person may be

- 1. an idolater
- 2. a disobedient covenant person
- 3. a practical atheist
- 4. an apathetic follower
- 5. an aggressive rich person
- 6. a disloyal political person

In verse 32 he/she is described as one who (see strophe 35-40)

- 1. spies upon the righteous
- 2. seeks to kill him/them

37:28 “They are preserved forever” The LXX changes this to “the evildoers will be chased away.” This is suggested to preserve the acrostic structure (i.e., *‘ayin*) and fit the parallelism. The UBS Text Project gives the MT a “B” rating (some doubt).

- 1. MT – נשמדו
- 2. LXX – נשדו (NEB, NJB, REB)

37:31 “The law of God” This term (BDB 435) is one of several terms used to describe YHWH's revelation to Israel (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:2).

▣ **“in his heart”** This is the internalization of God's revelation (i.e., God's Law written on the heart) and is a marker of the “new covenant” of Jer. 31:31-34.

▣ **“His steps do not slip”** Godly living is figuratively described as a straight, level, unobstructed path, a clearly marked road (cf. v. 34a, “His way,” see note at Ps. 1:1). The opposite would be

- 1. steps slipped
- 2. in the miry clay
- 3. stumbled over

In the NT this same imagery is found (i.e., “walk,” cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:35-40

- ³⁵**I have seen a wicked, violent man**
Spreading himself like a luxuriant tree in its native soil.
- ³⁶**Then he passed away, and lo, he was no more;**
I sought for him, but he could not be found.
- ³⁷**Mark the blameless man, and behold the upright;**
For the man of peace will have a posterity.
- ³⁸**But transgressors will be altogether destroyed;**
The posterity of the wicked will be cut off.
- ³⁹**But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;**

He is their strength in time of trouble.

⁴⁰The LORD helps them and delivers them;

He delivers them from the wicked and saves them,

Because they take refuge in Him.

37:35-40 This strophe summarizes the contrast between the righteous and the wicked.

1. the wicked
 - a. violent (lit. “terror-striking,” BDB 792)
 - b. spreading (rapidly, BDB 947) his influencing power and control like a luxuriant tree in the land (MT uncertain)
 - c. his days are numbered and he will be no more
 - d. he/they will be destroyed along with their descendants (see note below at #2 c.)
2. the righteous
 - a. mark (lit. “keep watch”) the blameless man (see Special Topic at Ps. 18:20-24) – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. behold the upright – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - c. the man of peace will have a posterity (either afterlife or children)
 - d. they are saved by YHWH
 - e. YHWH is their strength in time of trouble
 - f. YHWH helps them
 - g. YHWH delivers them

All of this occurs because they take refuge in Him

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is this Psalm related to Psalms 49 and 73, and the book of Job?
2. Why are men described in terms of grass and flowers?
3. What is the etymology of the term “trust” and what is the significance for our lives?
4. What is the central theme of this Psalm?
5. Why are verses 16 and 24 such an important balance to traditional OT wisdom?
6. Does this Psalm teach temporal or eschatological judgment? Why?

PSALM 38

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer of a Suffering Penitent	Prayer In Time of Chastening	Prayer For Healing in Sickness (A Lament)	The Prayer of a Sufferer	Prayer in Distress
<u>MT Intro</u> "A Psalm of David for a memorial"				
38:1-8	38:1-2 38:3-5 38:6-8	38:1-2 38:3-4 38:5-6 38:7-8	38:1-2 38:3-4 38:5-8	38:1-3 38:4-6 38:7-8
38:9-12	38:9-10 38:11-12	38:9-11 38:12	38:9-12	38:9-10 38:11-12
38:13-22	38:13-14 38:15-20 38:21-22	38:13-14 38:15-16 38:17-20 38:21-22	38:13-14 38:15-17 38:18-20 38:21-22	38:13-14 38:15-16 38:17-18 38:19-20 38:21-22

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm has much in common with Psalms 32 and 51.
- B. In Jewish thought sin and sickness were related. Confession of sin brought answered prayer and restoration of mind, spirit, and body.
When one looks at all the physical problems mentioned, there are too many to be characteristic of one disease. Probably they are figurative (cf. Isa. 1:5-6). If so, the focus of the Psalm is not physical healing but forgiveness of sin!
- C. As in so many Psalms the connection between
1. the physical problems
 2. the attack of enemies
 3. the rejection of friends
- is uncertain. They are all related but how is a mystery. Are they literal or figurative of sin's social consequences?

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:1-8

- ¹O LORD, rebuke me not in Your wrath,
And chasten me not in Your burning anger.
- ²For Your arrows have sunk deep into me,
And Your hand has pressed down on me.
- ³There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation;
There is no health in my bones because of my sin.
- ⁴For my iniquities are gone over my head;
As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me.
- ⁵My wounds grow foul *and* fester
Because of my folly.
- ⁶I am bent over and greatly bowed down;
I go mourning all day long.
- ⁷For my loins are filled with burning,
And there is no soundness in my flesh.
- ⁸I am benumbed and badly crushed;
I groan because of the agitation of my heart.

38:1-8 Most other English translations have this section broken down into several strophes. Strophe division is not a textual issue. It is speculation not inspiration.

The psalmist describes his condition and feelings.

1. he senses YHWH's displeasure
 - a. do not rebuke me in Your wrath – BDB 406, KB 410, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 6:1
 - b. do not chasten me in Your burning anger – BDB 415, KB 418, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense; this VERB often is used of covenant violations (cf. Lev. 26:18,28; Ps. 6:1; 39:11; 94:10; 118:18; Hos. 10:10)

2. he feels YHWH's punishment
 - a. Your arrows have sunk deep into me, cf. Deut. 32:23; Job 6:4; Ps. 7:12-13; 45:5
 - b. Your hand has pressed me down, cf. Ps. 32:4; 39:10 (note same VERB in both lines but used in different senses, BDB 639, KB 692)
3. the physical result of YHWH's displeasure (because of sin, 38:3b,4,5b)
 - a. no soundness (BDB 1022, *shalom*) in my flesh
 - b. no health in my bones
 - c. wounds (lit. "stripes," BDB 289) grow foul (BDB 92, KB 107, *Hiphil* PERFECT) and fester (BDB 596, KB 583, *Qal* PERFECT)
 - d. bent over ("bent," BDB 730, KB 796, *Niphal* PERFECT; "bowed down," BDB 1005, KB 1458, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 35:14) in mourning
 - e. loins are filled (BDB 569, KB 583, *Qal* PERFECT) with burning
 - f. repeat of a. above
 - g. benumbed (BDB 806, KB 916, *Niphal* PERFECT, lit. "spent")
 - h. crushed (BDB 194, KB 221, *Niphal* PERFECT, *Piel* in Ps. 51:8)
 - i. groan (BDB 980, KB 1367, *Qal* PERFECT, i.e., animal sounds)

Notice the string of PERFECT TENSE VERBS. YHWH's "anger" (BDB 893) and "wrath" (BDB 409) have come (IMPERFECTS) and remain (PERFECTS)! What a terrible condition of mind (38:4, 8b) and body!

38:4 "over my head" This VERB (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* PERFECT) is used of water.

1. flood as war – Isa. 8:8; 23:10; Dan. 11:10,40; Nahum 1:8
2. waves – literal in Isa. 54:9
3. waves – figurative of problems and emotions – Ps. 42:8; 88:16-17; 124:4-5

The psalmist's guilt from sin has overwhelmed him!

38:5 "fester" This VERB (BDB 596, KB 628, *Niphal* PERFECT) is used in Leviticus 26, the cursing and blessing passage parallel to Deuteronomy 27-28. It denoted a "rotten decay" (cf. Lev. 26:39 [twice]). Sin destroys! Often in horrible ways!

38:6 "mourning" This term is from the Hebrew root "to be dark" (BDB 871). It could mean

1. dressed in dark clothing as a sign of mourning
2. dirt placed on head and clothing as a sign of mourning
3. an idiom for the condition of the heart, soul, mind (here because of known sin)

▣ **"I am bent over and greatly bowed down"** There are two parallel VERBS.

1. bent over – BDB 730, KB 796, *Niphal* PERFECT which can be viewed as
 - a. bewilderment – Isa. 21:3
 - b. perversion of mind – 1 Sam.20:30; Pro. 12:8
 - c. literal – which matches the parallel VERB
2. bowed down – BDB 1005, KB 1458, *Qal* PERFECT which seems to denote a bent body as a figure of a bent heart

38:7 "loins" There are several terms that are used in the OT to represent the whole person.

1. soul – BDB 659, *nephesh*
2. spirit – BDB 924, *ruah*
3. heart – BDB 524, *leb*
4. kidneys – BDB 480
5. only here, loins – BDB 492

There are several more. Only context can determine when this concept is meant. One part of the body represents the whole person.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:9-12

⁹**LORD, all my desire is before You;
And my sighing is not hidden from You.**
¹⁰**My heart throbs, my strength fails me;
And the light of my eyes, even that has gone from me.**
¹¹**My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague;
And my kinsmen stand afar off.**
¹²**Those who seek my life lay snares *for me*;
And those who seek to injure me have threatened destruction,
And they devise treachery all day long.**

38:9-12 This strophe also describes the author's terrible condition.

1. his condition
 - a. his desire (i.e. prayer) is before YHWH (i.e., for forgiveness and restoration of fellowship)
 - b. his sighing is known to YHWH, cf. Ps. 31:10
2. his physical condition
 - a. heart throbs – BDB 695, KB 749, *Niphal* PERFECT
 - b. strength fails – BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* PERFECT
 - c. eyes fail – no VERBS; this is not referring to blindness but is an idiom for the lack of health, joy, peace, cf. Ps. 13:3; 1 Sam. 14:29; Ezra 9:8
3. interpersonal issues
 - a. loved ones stand aloof
 - b. friends stand aloof
 - c. kinsmen stand far off
 - d. enemies seek his death
 - (1) lay snares
 - (2) threaten destruction
 - (3) devise treachery all day long; the VERB BDB 211, KB 237, is lit. “groan.” The psalmist “groans” (BDB 980, v. 8) but the wicked “devise” (cf. Pro. 24:2).

38:11

NASB, NKJV	“plague”
NRSV, JPSOA	“affliction”
TEV	“sores”
NJB	“disease”
REB	“sickness”

The word (BDB 619) means “stroke/wound,” “plague,” or “mark.”

1. plague – cf. Gen. 12:17; Exod. 11:1; 1 Kgs. 8:37-38; 2 Chr. 6:28-29; Ps. 39:10; 91:10
2. leprosy (OT sense) – Leviticus 13-14; Deut. 24:8
3. wound – Deut. 17:8; 21:5; Isa. 53:8
4. discipline (for children) – 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 89:33; Pro. 6:23

Most words have multiple usages or else human vocabulary would be impossible to know and use. When an interpreter comes to a context, they seek the meaning intended by the original author and understandable to the hearers/readers of that day. This context is a divinely given physical manifestation of His displeasure

over human sin. The punishment is meant to restore the person to faith. In this verse the parallelism suggests that the physical punishment frightened those who saw it, even close friends and relatives.

Therefore, in coming to a choice, several items are in play.

1. What physical manifestation?
2. Why the manifestation?
3. Why the response from others close by?
4. Is it figurative or literal?

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:13-22

- ¹³**But I, like a deaf man, do not hear;
And *I am* like a mute man who does not open his mouth.**
- ¹⁴**Yes, I am like a man who does not hear,
And in whose mouth are no arguments.**
- ¹⁵**For I hope in You, O LORD;
You will answer, O LORD my God.**
- ¹⁶**For I said, “May they not rejoice over me,
Who, when my foot slips, would magnify themselves against me.”**
- ¹⁷**For I am ready to fall,
And my sorrow is continually before me.**
- ¹⁸**For I confess my iniquity;
I am full of anxiety because of my sin.**
- ¹⁹**But my enemies are vigorous *and* strong,
And many are those who hate me wrongfully.**
- ²⁰**And those who repay evil for good,
They oppose me, because I follow what is good.**
- ²¹**Do not forsake me, O LORD;
O my God, do not be far from me!**
- ²²**Make haste to help me,
O LORD, my salvation!**

38:13-22 This strophe has a mixture of current conditions (sickness, pain, injury) and future hope in YHWH's mercy.

1. current physical problems
 - a. does not hear (i.e., pretends he does not hear their slander), v. 13; Ps. 39:2,4
 - b. does not speak (i.e., respond to his accusers, cf. Isa. 53:7), v. 13b
 - c. ready to stumble, vv. 16b-17a; metaphor for trouble, cf. Deut. 32:35; God's path was straight, level, and clear of obstacles
 - d. sorrow continually before him (his sin weighs heavily on him), v. 17b; Ps. 51:3
 - e. full of anxiety, v. 18
2. his enemies attack, vv. 16,19-20
 - a. they grow strong and numerous, v. 19a
 - b. they hate him wrongfully, v. 19b
 - c. they repay evil for good, v. 20; Ps. 35:12; 109:5
 - d. they oppose him because he does what is good, v. 20b

3. confidence in YHWH's love, mercy, and forgiveness
 - a. hope (lit. "wait," BDB 403, KB 407, *Hiphil* PERFECT) in YHWH, v. 15a, cf. Job 13:15; Ps. 31:24; 33:22; 39:7; 42:5,11; 43:5
 - b. confident YHWH will answer his prayer, v. 15b
 - c. confident his enemies will not succeed and gloat over his fall, v. 16
 - d. he prays (two JUSSIVES, one IMPERATIVE)
 - (1) do not forsake me – BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 9:11; 71:9,18; 94:14; 119:8; Isa. 49:14
 - (2) do not be far from me – BDB 934, KB 1221, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 22:11,19; 35:22; 71:12
 - (3) make haste to help me – BDB 301, KB 300, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 22:19b; 40:13; 70:1,5; 71:12; 141:1

38:18 This is the theological key to this Psalm (cf. Ps. 32:5). Confession brings

1. forgiveness from YHWH (cf. Psalm 51; note 1 John 1:9-2:1)
2. forgiveness for self
3. a sense of restoration of fellowship

Confession recognizes

1. human guilt for breaking YHWH's laws
2. YHWH's character of forgiveness and mercy

38:19

NASB, NKJV	"vigorous"
NRSV	"without cause"
TEV	"healthy"
NJB, REB	"without cause"
NET Bible	"for no reason"

The MT has "living" (חַיִּים, BDB 313), but several English translations emend the root to חָנַם, BDB 336, cf. Ps. 35:19; 69:4. This fits the parallelism of the next line, "who hate me wrongfully" (BDB 1055).

38:20 "adversaries" This is the Hebrew root (BDB 966) from which we get the term "satan."

SPECIAL TOPIC: SATAN

This is a very difficult subject for several reasons.

1. The OT reveals not an archenemy of good, but a servant of YHWH, who offers mankind an alternative and also accuses mankind of unrighteousness. There is only one God (monotheism), one power, one cause in the OT—YHWH.
2. The concept of a personal archenemy of God developed in the interbiblical (non-canonical) literature under the influence of Persian dualistic religions (*Zoroastrianism*). This, in turn, greatly influenced rabbinical Judaism and the Essene community (i.e., Dead Sea Scrolls).
3. The NT develops the OT themes in surprisingly stark, but selective, categories.

If one approaches the study of evil from the perspective of biblical theology (each book or author or genre studied and outlined separately), then very different views of evil are revealed.

If, however, one approaches the study of evil from a non-biblical or extra-biblical approach of world religions or eastern religions, then much of the NT development is foreshadowed in Persian dualism and Greco-Roman spiritism.

If one is presuppositionally committed to the divine authority of Scripture, then the NT development must be seen as progressive revelation. Christians must guard against allowing Jewish folklore or western literature (Dante, Milton) to further influence the concept. There is certainly mystery and ambiguity in this area of revelation. God has chosen not to reveal all aspects of evil, its origin, its development, its purpose, but He has revealed its defeat!

In the OT the term “satan” or “accuser” (BDB 966) can relate to three separate groups.

1. human accusers (cf. 1 Sam.29:4; 2 Sam. 19:22; 1 Kgs. 11:14,20,29; Ps. 109:6)
2. angelic accusers (cf. Num. 22:22-23; Job 1-2; Zech. 3:1)
3. demonic accusers (cf. 1 Chr. 21:1; 1 Kgs. 22:21; Zech. 13:2)

Only later in the intertestamental period is the serpent of Genesis 3 identified with Satan (cf. *Book of Wisdom* 2.23-24; *II Enoch* 31:3), and even later does this become a rabbinical option (cf. *Sot* 9b and *Sanh.* 29a). The “sons of God” of Genesis 6 become angels in *I Enoch* 54:6. I mention this, not to assert its theological accuracy, but to show its development. In the NT these OT activities are attributed to angelic, personified evil (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9).

The origin of personified evil is difficult or impossible (depending on your point of view) to determine from the OT. One reason for this is Israel’s strong monotheism (see Special Topic: Monotheism; also note 1 Kgs. 22:20-22; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). All causality was attributed to YHWH to demonstrate His uniqueness and primacy (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5-6,14,18,21,22).

Sources of possible information are (1) Job 1-2, where Satan is one of the “sons of God” (i.e., angels) or (2) Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, where prideful near-eastern kings (Babylon and Tyre) are possibly used to illustrate the pride of Satan (cf. 1 Tim. 3:6). I have mixed emotions about this approach. Ezekiel uses Garden of Eden metaphors, not only for the king of Tyre as Satan (cf. Ezek. 28:12-16), but also for the king of Egypt as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Ezekiel 31). However, Isaiah 14, particularly vv. 12-14, seems to describe an angelic revolt through pride. If God wanted to reveal to us the specific nature and origin of Satan, this is a very oblique way and place to do it. We must guard against the trend of systematic theology of taking small, ambiguous parts of different testaments, authors, books, and genres and combining them as pieces of one divine puzzle.

I agree with Alfred Edersheim (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendices XIII [pp. 748-763] and XVI [pp.770-776]) that rabbinical Judaism has been overly influenced by Persian dualism and demonic speculation. The rabbis are not a good source for truth in this area. Jesus radically diverges from the teachings of the Synagogue in this area. I think that the concept of an archangelic enemy of YHWH developed from the two high gods of Iranian dualism, *Ahkiman* and *Ormaza*, and were then developed by the rabbis into a biblical dualism of YHWH and Satan.

There is surely progressive revelation in the NT as to the personification of evil, but not as elaborate as the rabbis. A good example of this difference is the “war in heaven.” The fall of Satan is a logical necessity, but the specifics are not given. Even what is given is veiled in apocalyptic genre (cf. Rev. 12:4,7,12-13). Although Satan is defeated in Jesus and exiled to earth, he still functions as a servant of YHWH (cf. Matt. 4:1; Luke 22:31-32; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20).

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and we are still responsible for our choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does YHWH punish His sinful followers in this life (vv. 2-3)?
2. Is verse 4 a confession of many sins or a literary way of asserting the sinfulness of all humans?
3. List the physical problems associated with unconfessed sin.
4. Define the word “plague” in verse 11. Does your definition explain others’ reactions to him?
5. How is the imagery of “foot slip” related to a life of sin?
6. Why is verse 18 so important?

PSALM 39

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Vanity Of Life	Prayer for Wisdom and Forgiveness	Prayer for Healing In Sickness (A Lament)	The Confession of a Sufferer	Insignificance of Human Beings Before God
<u>MT Intro</u> “For the choir director, for Jeduthun.” A Psalm of David				
39:1-6	39:1-3	39:1-6	39:1-4	39:1-2 39:3-4
	39:4-6		39:5-6	39:5-6
39:7-11	39:7-11	39:7-10	39:7-11	39:7-9 39:10-11
		39:11		
39:12-13	39:12-13	39:12-13	39:12-13	39:12-13

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. At first this Psalm is confusing. It starts out in a veiled literary technique, almost like a divine secret that cannot be shared/understood by outsiders to a faithful (but still sinful) walk with YHWH, v. 8.

- B. The divine secret and human question is the transitoriness of human life. Mankind is so frail, fragile, temporary, ignorant, and usually focuses his/her attention on the wrong things (cf. vv. 6, 11).
- C. This Psalm in many ways reminds me of Ecclesiastes (the futility of life if there is no God). The psalmist characterizes himself in surprising ways.
1. like a stranger, v. 12
 2. like a sojourner, v. 12
- D. Verse 13 is still a mystery to me. The shocking truth of our fallen condition is that
1. we are attracted to God
 2. His holiness frightens us and repels us, all at once!
- There is a real mental conflict between the transitoriness of the human situation and the eternity of our God who created us for fellowship. We cannot be happy without knowing and loving Him. But we are broken and temporal. He is perfect and eternal.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:1-6

¹I said, "I will guard my ways
That I may not sin with my tongue;
I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle
While the wicked are in my presence."
²I was mute and silent,
I refrained *even* from good,
And my sorrow grew worse.
³My heart was hot within me,
While I was musing the fire burned;
Then I spoke with my tongue:
⁴"LORD, make me to know my end
And what is the extent of my days;
Let me know how transient I am.
⁵Behold, You have made my days *as* handbreadths,
And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight;
Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah.
⁶Surely every man walks about as a phantom;
Surely they make an uproar for nothing;
He amasses *riches* and does not know who will gather them."

39:1-6 The wicked live only for today, for themselves, but the faithful follower knows he lives and speaks for YHWH. However, without the aid of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65) the wicked cannot comprehend

1. their own spiritual and physical condition
2. the truth of God

They ask the wrong questions and focus on the wrong things.

39:1 “I will guard” Notice that the VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* COHORTATIVE) is repeated. The psalmist should not speak his thought about life and God in the presence of entrenched unbelief (i.e., Matt. 7:6). This strophe cannot be proof-texted as a Scripture against witnessing to others. But it is true that some issues, some doctrines should be avoided in our conversations with unbelievers at first because of possible misunderstanding or confusion. A biblical worldview requires

1. the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65)
2. a receptive heart (Matthew 13)
3. revelation in an understandable form
4. time/effort

The UBS *Handbook* (p. 374) interprets the silence as the psalmist not wanting to complain about his life in the presence of the wicked.

▣ **“That I may not sin with my tongue”** The sin here must be understood in context as speaking truth that the wicked cannot receive (cf. Matt. 7:6).

39:2-3 Apparently the psalmist tried not to think on these issues himself. But revelation caused him to address God with his question and concern about the fleetingness and transitoriness of human life.

39:2 “I refrained even from good” The MT of this line is “I held my peace to no avail” (i.e., without success; lit. “no good,” BDB 373). This is ambiguous and different translations explain it differently. In context it refers to the psalmist’s desire to speak but felt he should not. His reluctance to speak did not help the situation.

If life is so short, what should fallen humans focus on? The fate of the righteous and the unrighteous seems the same (cf. Eccl. 2:14-16,19,26; 9:2-3).

39:3 “the fire burned” This VERB (BDB 128, KB 145, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is the same that describes Jeremiah’s compulsion to speak YHWH’s word (cf. Jer. 20:9).

39:4-6 These are the issues the psalmist was “musing” (BDB 211, cf. Ps. 5:1) about.

1. the uncertainty of life
2. the fleetingness of life
3. the false focus (i.e., fame, riches) of life
4. the unfairness of life

39:5 “handbreadths” This term (BDB 381) is one of several Hebrew measurements from the human body.

1. arms outstretched
2. finger tip to elbow
3. fingers outstretched
4. four fingers together
5. one digit of a finger

SPECIAL TOPIC: CUBIT

There are two cubits (BDB 52, KB 61) in the Bible. The regular cubit is the distance between an average man’s longest finger and his elbow, usually around 18 inches (e.g., Gen. 6:15; Exod. 25:10,17,23; 26:2,8,13,16; 27:1,9,12,13,14,16,18; Num. 35:4,5; Deut. 3:11). There is also a longer cubit (royal cubit) used in construction (i.e., Solomon’s temple), which was common in Egypt (i.e., 21 fingers), Palestine (i.e., 24 fingers), and sometimes Babylon (i.e., 30 fingers). It was 21 inches long (cf. Ezek. 40:5; 43:13).

The ancients used parts of the human body for measurement. The people of the Ancient Near East used:

1. length from elbow to middle finger (cubit)
2. width from outstretched thumb to little finger (span, cf. Exod. 28:16; 39:9; 1 Sam.17:4)
3. length between all four fingers of a closed hand (handbreadth, cf. Exod. 25:25; 37:12; 1 Kgs. 7:26; 2 Chr. 4:5)
4. length of middle joint of finger (fingerbreadth, Jer. 52:21)

The cubit (BDB 52, KB 61) was not completely standardized, but there were two basic lengths.

1. normal male's elbow to middle finger (about 18 inches, cf. Deut. 3:11)
2. royal cubit was a bit longer (about 20 inches, cf. 2 Chr. 3:3; Ezek. 40:5; 43:13)

▣ **“my lifetime as nothing in Your sight”** This is not asserting that YHWH does not care but that human life is fleeting and insignificant when compared to YHWH (cf. Isa. 40:15).

▣ **“a mere breath”** This phrase (BDB 481 CONSTRUCT BDB 210 I) is another connection to Ecclesiastes (cf. Eccl. 1:2; 12:8; lit. “vapor,” “breath,” “vanity”). This term is used thirty times in Ecclesiastes and only nine in the Psalms (cf. Ps. 39:5,6,11; 144:4) and three in Proverbs.

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Ps. 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII.

39:6 “phantom” This is literally “shadow” (BDB 853). It can refer to clouds but is used regularly in a figurative sense of the transitoriness of life (cf. Job 8:9; 14:2; Ps. 102:11; 109:23; 144:4). This is the issue of this Psalm! Psalm 8 would be a good theological parallel.

▣ **“He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them”** This is so similar to the thought of *Qoheleth* in Eccl. 2:18-23.

The NASB Study Bible (p. 778) has a good comment on this verse.
“Could almost serve as a summary of Ecclesiastes.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:7-11

⁷**“And now, LORD, for what do I wait?**

My hope is in You.

⁸**Deliver me from all my transgressions;**

Make me not the reproach of the foolish.

⁹**I have become mute, I do not open my mouth,**

Because it is You who have done *it*.

¹⁰**Remove Your plague from me;**

Because of the opposition of Your hand I am perishing.

¹¹**With reproofs You chasten a man for iniquity;**

You consume as a moth what is precious to him;

Surely every man is a mere breath.”

Selah.

39:7-11 This strophe is a general summary of how YHWH deals with His faithful followers amidst all the questions and confusion of life in a fallen world.

1. they wait for YHWH
2. they hope in YHWH (#1,2 are the theological key in our mysterious and transitory lives)
3. they pray for deliverance from YHWH – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (cf. Ps. 38:10)
4. they pray not to be foolish – BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
5. YHWH guides our words and life (cf. Psalm 139)
6. they seek the removal of YHWH's judgment – BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

In verses 10-11 the reasons for YHWH's actions are spelled out.

1. YHWH is active in their lives
2. YHWH's judgments are disciplinary not just punitive
3. YHWH takes away the things we trust in and cherish more than Him! Everything except YHWH is transitory! Do you get it?!

39:10

NASB, NKJV,

JPSOA "plague"

NRSV "stroke"

TEV, REB "blows"

NJB, LXX "scourge"

The Hebrew NOUN (BDB 619, see note at Ps. 38:11) is used often of a disease sent by YHWH.

1. plague – Gen. 12:17; Exod. 11:1; 1 Kgs. 8:37; Ps. 38:11; 39:10
2. strike/stroke – Ps. 89:23; Isa. 53:8
3. scourge – Ps. 89:23

YHWH can remove it because He sent it! It is always hard, if not impossible, to know the source of an illness, event, crisis, etc. in this life. The OT's theology attributed all causality to YHWH as a theological way of asserting monotheism. But from the progressive revelation of the NT several options arise.

1. God does send things
 - a. for punishment
 - b. for spiritual growth (cf. Heb. 5:8)
2. God allows (not sends) things to occur
3. we live in a fallen world where bad things happen (statistical evil)

I have chosen, by faith (as did the psalmist), to trust, hope, and wait (cf. Ps. 38:15; 39:7) on God in the midst of the mysterious, unfair, often evil events of life. I do not understand "why" or "why now" or "why this" or "how long," but I do by faith believe that God is with me, for me, and that there can be a purpose and effective outcome for all things (cf. Rom. 8:28-30,31-39)! It is a worldview, a faith stance, a theological orientation!

☐ **"the opposition of Your hand"** Hand is an idiom for power to act (see Special Topic at Ps. 7:3-4). As to the theological issue see Ps. 32:4 and 38:2. God as a disciplining, loving parent is a wonderful metaphor (cf. Pro. 3:11-12). He is active in our lives because He does not want us to destroy ourselves and others. The "hand" of discipline has a positive purpose (cf. Heb. 12:5-13).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:12-13

¹²**"Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry;**

Do not be silent at my tears;

For I am a stranger with You,

A sojourner like all my fathers.

**¹³Turn Your gaze away from me, that I may smile again
Before I depart and am no more.”**

39:12-13 As is common in the Psalms, it closes with prayer requests.

1. Hear – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. Give ear – BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. Do not be silent – BDB 361, KB 357, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 28:1; 35:22; 83:1; 109:1
4. Turn Your gaze away – BDB 1043, KB 1609, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, see Job 7:17-19; 10:20-21; 14:6
5. That I may smile again – BDB 114, KB 132, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE, see Job 9:27; 10:20

39:12 The last two lines of this verse address the tension between

1. special covenant people
2. continuing sinners with fleeting lives (cf. 1 Chr. 29:15; Ps. 119:19,54; Heb. 11:13; 1 Pet. 2:11).

Remember this is the fog of the OT. The gospel of Jesus Christ will address many of these issues and questions about life, purpose, and eternity!

▣ **“I am a stranger”** This word/concept bothers me. It seems to denote one who does not know God or is not known by God. But in context it refers to a visitor in a tent who stays one or two nights and departs. It is another example of figurative language used to describe and bemoan the transitoriness of human life.

39:13 In light of the holiness of YHWH, this life becomes distressed (cf. Job 14:6). The pull to be like YHWH (cf. Matt. 5:48; Lev. 19:2) is overwhelming. Only in Jesus can a peace come for us to be in the presence (i.e., gaze, i.e., associated with YHWH’s judgment, cf. Job 7:19; 14:6; Isa. 22:4) of a holy God!

In light of this verse, Peter’s request in Luke 5:8 makes sense!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does the psalmist want to be silent in the presence of the wicked (v. 1)?
2. Explain in your own words the implication of verse 4.
3. What is a “handbreadth”?
4. Explain verse 11b. Why would YHWH take everything precious from one of His followers?
5. Does verse 11c imply that YHWH does not care about individual humans?
6. What does verse 12, c and d, mean? Are we strangers to YHWH?
7. Explain in your own words the meaning or implication of verse 13.

PSALM 40

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God Sustains His Servant	Faith Persevering in Trial	Thanksgiving For Deliverance From Trouble, Together With a Prayer for Help	A Song of Praise	Song of Praise and Prayer For Help
<u>MT Intro</u> “For the choir director. A Psalm of David”				
40:1-3	40:1-3	40:1-3	40:1-3	40:1 40:2 40:3
40:4-5	40:4-5	40:4-5	40:4-5	40:4 40:5
40:6-8	40:6-8	40:6-8	40:6-8	40:6-7a 40:7b-8
40:9-10	40:9-10	40:9-10	40:9-10	40:9-10
40:11-12	40:11-12	40:11-12	40:11 A Prayer For Help	40:11
40:13-17	40:13-15 40:16-17	40:13-15 40:16-17	40:12-15 40:16-17	40:12 40:13-14a 40:14b-15 40:16 40:17

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:1-3

¹I waited patiently for the LORD;

And He inclined to me and heard my cry.

²He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay,

And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.

³He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God;

Many will see and fear

And will trust in the LORD.

40:1-3 The psalmist praises YHWH for His past acts of deliverance. YHWH responded to his prayers (i.e., “inclined,” BDB 639, KB 692, *Qal* IMPERFECT and “heard,” BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT).

YHWH had

1. brought him up out of the pit of destruction (lit. “pit of tumult/noise,” BDB 92 CONSTRUCT BDB 981, cf. Ps. 69:2; this could be water imagery of death (cf. Ps. 18:4) or a flood (cf. Ps. 18:16)
2. brought him up out of the miry clay
 - a. used of mire in the streets – 2 Sam. 22:43; Micah 7:10; Zech. 9:3; 10:5
 - b. used of mire in a cistern – Jer. 38:6
 - c. used figuratively of distress – Ps. 40:2; 69:14 (“pit” also mentioned in 69:15)
 - d. possibly refers to *Sheol* (i.e., death, UBS *Handbook*, p. 381)
3. set his feet upon a rock making his footsteps firm – godly, faithful covenant followers were those who walked on straight, level, unobstructed paths (cf. Ps. 17:5; 18:36; 37:31; 44:18; 69:9; 73:2; 94:18; Job 23:11; 31:7)
4. put a new song in his mouth, a song of praise – new songs were a cultural way to acknowledge and glorify YHWH’s acts of deliverance (cf. Exodus 15; Judges 5; Deuteronomy 32); see note at Ps. 33:5; also note Ps. 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa. 42:10; Rev. 5:9; 14:3

The purpose of YHWH’s deliverance of the psalmist was not just special treatment for one human but to bless and protect His covenant followers so that others (i.e., “many,” BDB 912 I) would become covenant followers.

1. see – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. fear – BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. trust – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERFECT

40:1 “waited patiently” This is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a PERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 875, KB 1082) used to denote intensity.

▣ **“inclined”** This VERB (BDB 639, KB 692, cf. Ps. 17:6; 88:2) means “to bend.” The imagery is either YHWH bent His ear to hear clearly or YHWH bent down to hear (cf. Job 15:29).

40:2 “rock” See note at Psalm 18:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:4-5

⁴How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust,

And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood.

⁵Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which You have done,

**And Your thoughts toward us;
 There is none to compare with You.
 If I would declare and speak of them,
 They would be too numerous to count.**

40:4-5 “How blessed is the man” This is the key thought of this strophe. This term (BDB 80) is used 26 times in the Psalms. See full note at Ps. 1:1. Psalm 41 starts with this phrase. It is used mostly in Psalms and Proverbs (i.e., Wisdom Literature), which focuses on a successful and prosperous life.

The reasons given for the blessed state are

1. who has made YHWH his trust
2. who has not turned (BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* PERFECT) to the proud (LXX, NRSV, TEV see #2,3 referring to idols)
3. who has not turned (BDB 962, KB 1312, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, word found only here in the OT)

In verse 5 the attributes of YHWH are listed.

1. many are the wonders (see Special Topic at Ps. 9:1 and note at Ps. 40:5)
2. many are His thoughts toward the covenant people
3. none compare with You (cf. Ps. 16:2; Isa. 6:8-10; i.e., monotheism, see Special Topic at Ps. 2:7)
4. His wonders and thoughts are too numerous to count
 - a. declare – BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
 - b. speak – BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* COHORTATIVE

40:5 This verse seems to be reflecting on YHWH’s great acts of deliverance for Israel, especially the Exodus. The “us” must refer to the faith community from the descendants of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1-3). Within the covenant community are the faithful and the unfaithful (cf. 40:4), yet YHWH sustains the whole community. He has a universal, redemptive purpose for Israel (cf. Ps. 33:10-12).

The term “wonder” (BDB 810, see Special Topic at Ps. 9:1) is often used in connection to the Exodus.

1. VERB – Exod. 3:20; 34:10; Deut. 28:59
2. NOUN – Exod. 15:11

The Exodus was the major evidence of YHWH’s fidelity to His promises (cf. Gen. 15:12-21) and the demonstration of His power and purpose for Israel (cf. Gen. 12:3).

▣ **“too numerous to count”** This may be a verbal link to the promises to Abraham that his descendants would be too numerous to count (i.e., as dust, cf. Gen. 13:16; 28:14; Num. 23:10; as sand, cf. Gen. 22:17; 32:12; as stars, cf. Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4). Another wonder of YHWH from an infertile, older couple!

A good parallel text would be Ps. 139:17-18, which also notes the numerous acts of deliverance by YHWH. Notice it mentions “outnumber the sand,” which is another allusion to the promise of Abraham’s descendants.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:6-8

**⁶Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired;
 My ears You have opened;
 Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required.
⁷Then I said, “Behold, I come;
 In the scroll of the book it is written of me.
⁸I delight to do Your will, O my God;
 Your Law is within my heart.”**

40:6-8 This strophe uses the Mosaic Law as a literary foil to the psalmist's new personal relationship based on the concept similar to the new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 (i.e., the Law is within my heart, cf. Isa. 51:7). The motivation for worship, obedience, service, and perseverance is internal (cf. Deut. 6:6).

The sacrificial system was YHWH's method of dealing with human sin among His covenant community. Innocent animals died in the place of sinful humans (cf. Ezek. 18:4,20; Rom. 6:23). It was a typological model of the coming Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (cf. John 1:29; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 10:1-18).

The problem with the Mosaic covenant is that for many Jews it became an external moral code instead of a means to intimate personal faith (cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25; Rom. 2:28-29).

The NT sees this strophe (vv. 6-8) as ultimately fulfilled by Jesus' life and death (cf. Heb. 10:5-7 from the LXX). He is the perfect fulfillment of these texts. He is the "ideal Israelite," dying on behalf of all (cf. Isaiah 53).

40:6 There are four different words used to describe the different sacrifices of Israel (cf. Leviticus 1-7).

1. sacrifices – BDB 257, general term for sacrifices where part of the animal was eaten in a fellowship with their Deity
2. meal offerings – BDB 585, originally referred to both animal and grain offerings but came to be used of grain only
3. burnt offerings – BDB 750 II, referred to an offering that was consumed completely on the altar
4. sin offerings – BDB 308, one of two FEMININE NOUNS; this is the rarer one; it is translated "great sin" in Gen. 20:9; Exod. 32:21,30,31; 2 Kgs. 17:21; and "sin" in Ps. 32:1; 109:7. Here it seems to refer to a sin offering because of the parallelism but the usage is unique.

This verse is not a rejection of the sacrificial system but its abuse (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Ps. 50:8-14; 51:16-17; 69:30-31; Isa. 1:11-15; Jer. 7:22-23; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21-22).



NASB, NKJV	"opened"
NASB margin	"dug or pierced"
NRSV margin	"dug"
LXX	"a body you have prepared for me"

This VERB (BDB 500, KB 496, *Qal* PERFECT) has this meaning only here. It is used of digging

1. a well – Gen. 26:25; Num. 21:18
2. a grave – Gen. 50:5
3. a pit – Exod. 21:23
4. figuratively a plot – Ps. 7:16; 57:7; 119:85; Pro. 16:27; 26:27; Jer. 18:20 (i.e., compare Jer. 6:10)

The NASB marginal suggestion, "pierced," possibly comes from Exod. 21:5-6 or Deut. 15:12-18, where a slave is made a permanent member of the household (cf. 40:17, different VERB and "ear" is SINGULAR).

The LXX translation must be based on a different Hebrew manuscript or it paraphrased the thought sensing that "ears" stood for the whole body. The LXX was what the early church used and it is quoted in Heb. 10:5 (cf. Heb. 10:1-18).

In context the VERB refers to the new relationship of faith and trust established by the new covenant model (i.e., "Your Law is within my heart," cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27), which allows sinful humans to clearly know and do YHWH's will (i.e., 40:8).

40:7

NASB, NKJV	"Behold, I come"
NRSV, TEV,	
REB	"Here I am"

NJB “Here I am, I am coming”
LXX “Look, I have come”
NET “Look, I come”

The translation, “Here I am,” comes from the use of the same interjection (BDB 243) used by Isaiah in Isa. 6:8, combined with the VERB (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* PERFECT), “I come” (different VERB from Isa. 6:8).

It is an idiom of availability and surrender to YHWH’s will and plan for one’s life (cf. 40:7b-8). In this context (i.e., sacrifice) it may refer to the fact that in the OT there was no sacrifice for known, intentional sin (cf. Lev. 4:2,22,27; 5:15-18; 22:14; Ps. 51:16-17). Only the sins of passion or ignorance were covered (i.e., unintentional). The psalmist sees that the only appropriate sacrifice was himself (cf. Rom.12:1). This is surely a foreshadowing of the Lamb of God (cf. John 1:29) who came to give Himself (cf. Mark 10:45; Isaiah 53).

▣ **“In the scroll of the book”** Some scholars see this as referring to YHWH’s revelation to Moses. The king was given a copy (cf. Deut. 17:18-20; 1 Kgs. 2:3; 2 Kgs. 11:12). The Bible uses “book(s)” to denote YHWH’s plans for each person (cf. Ps. 139:1-6,16) or memory of the lives of all humans who will one day stand before Him as judge. This imagery is expressed in two books, the book of life and the book of deeds. See Special Topic: The Two Books at Ps. 9:5.

40:8 “I delight to do Your will” What a radical change from Genesis 3. The damaged “image of God” has been restored! Fellowship at the deepest level is possible again. The independent spirit of the Fall is replaced by a dependent spirit.

Jesus modeled this servant attitude for us to see (cf. Matt. 26:39; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:9-10

⁹I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation;

Behold, I will not restrain my lips,

O LORD, You know.

¹⁰I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart;

I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation;

I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great congregation.

40:9-10 The psalmist witnesses of YHWH’s attributes in a temple/tabernacle (cf. Ps. 22:25) worship setting (i.e., the great congregation).

1. Your righteousness – BDB 842, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5
2. Your faithfulness – BDB 53, see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1
3. Your salvation – BDB 448, see Special Topic at Ps. 13:5-6
4. Your lovingkindness – BDB 338, see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7
5. Your truth – BDB 54, see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1

Verse 11 adds to this list (the strophe division is uncertain).

6. Your compassion – BDB 933
7. Your lovingkindness – BDB 338
8. Your Trust – BDB 54

These are the great theological words of the OT which describe how the covenant God deals with the sons/daughters of Adam because of His special call of Abraham (see Special Topic at Psalm 2 Intro.).

40:9 “You know” YHWH knows the heart of His human creation (cf. Jos. 22:22; 1 Sam.2:3; 16:7; 1 Kgs. 8:39; 1 Chr. 28:9; Ps. 139:2-4; Jer. 17:10; 20:12; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom. 8:27).

40:10 Notice the series of VERBS whereby the psalmist affirms his full and open testimony about YHWH.

1. I have proclaimed – BDB 142, KB 163, *Piel* PERFECT, v. 9
2. I have not hidden – BDB 491, KB 487, *Qal* PERFECT, v. 10
3. I have spoken – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* PERFECT, v. 10
4. I have not concealed – BDB 470, KB 469, *Piel* PERFECT

YHWH desires that His people lift up His character and actions in praise and witness, so that all humans made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) may come to know and worship Him!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:11-12

**¹¹You, O LORD, will not withhold Your compassion from me;
Your lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me.
¹²For evils beyond number have surrounded me;
My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to see;
They are more numerous than the hairs of my head,
And my heart has failed me.**

40:11-12 This strophe describes the current situation of the psalmist. YHWH is surely with him but there are problems (a series of PERFECTS).

1. evils beyond number have surrounded me – BDB 67, KB 79, *Qal* PERFECT; this list (AB, p. 247) is imagery taken from a pack of wild dogs attacking their prey; this number of problems is contrasted with YHWH’s “wonders” in 40:5
2. my iniquities have overtaken me – BDB 673, KB 727, *Hiphil* PERFECT; in several Psalms in Book One the psalmist acknowledges his sin, cf. 25:11; 31:10; 32:5; 38:4,18; this may be a literary way of affirming the sinfulness of all humans
3. I am not able to see – BDB 407, KB 410, *Qal* PERFECT; possibly connected to constant weeping, cf. Ps. 69:3; sin always causes a disruption in our relationship with God and our ability to know His will
4. he acknowledges his iniquities are very many – BDB 782, KB 868, *Qal* PERFECT; the imagery of “hairs of the head” is repeated in Ps. 69:4 and used by Jesus of YHWH’s knowledge of us in Matt. 10:30; it is an OT idiom, cf. 1 Sam.14:45; 2 Sam. 14:11; 1 Kgs. 1:52; Acts 27:34
5. his heart has failed (i.e., left) him – BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* PERFECT

The life of the faithful follower is a struggle between indwelling sin (cf. Romans 7) and God’s grace and mercy (cf. Romans 8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:13-17

**¹³Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me;
Make haste, O LORD, to help me.
¹⁴Let those be ashamed and humiliated together
Who seek my life to destroy it;
Let those be turned back and dishonored
Who delight in my hurt.
¹⁵Let those be appalled because of their shame
Who say to me, “Aha, aha!”**

**¹⁶Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;
 Let those who love Your salvation say continually,
 “The Lord be magnified!”
¹⁷Since I am afflicted and needy,
 Let the Lord be mindful of me.
 You are my help and my deliverer;
 Do not delay, O my God.**

40:13-17 As usual the concluding strophe is a series of prayer requests (IMPERFECTS and JUSSIVES in synonymous parallelism). This is very similar to Psalm 70.

1. Be pleased (BDB 953, KB 1280, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) to deliver me (BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). AB, p. 247, suggests a vowel change to the root for “run,” which parallels #2 better.
2. Make haste to help me – BDB 301, KB 300, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 22:19; 38:22; 70:1,5; 71:12; 141:1
3. Let those who seek my life be ashamed – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 35:4,26; 70:2; 63:17
4. Let those who seek my life be humiliated together – BDB 344, KB 346, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
5. Let those who delight in my hurt be turned back – BDB 690, KB 744, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 35:4,26; 70:2 (this is military imagery)
6. Let those who delight in my hurt be dishonored – BDB 483, KB 480, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
7. Let those who say to me “Aha, aha” (cf. Ps. 35:21; 70:3) be appalled – BDB 1030, KB 1563, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

At 40:16 the prayers change from negative to positive.

8. Let all those who seek You rejoice – BDB 965, KB 1314, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (notice that the wicked “seek” his life [BDB 134, KB 152] but the psalmist seeks YHWH, cf. v. 16)
9. Let all those who seek You be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
10. Let those who love Your salvation say. . . – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (faithful followers love YHWH by being obedient to His revealed will and way, cf. Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 11:1,13,22; 19:9; 30:15,16,19-20)
11. “. . . YHWH be magnified” – BDB 152, KB 178, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (this is in contrast to what the wicked say in v. 15)
12. Let YHWH be mindful of me – BDB 362, KB 359, *Qal* JUSSIVE
13. Do not delay – BDB 29, KB 34, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. 70:5; this forms an *inclusio* with “make haste” of v. 13

40:17 Notice how the psalmist characterizes himself and YHWH.

1. himself
 - a. afflicted (BDB 776)
 - b. needy (BDB 2)
 (these are often used of faithful followers, cf. Ps. 70:5; 86:1; 109:22; in this sense they are metaphorical of a sense of spiritual need, cf. Matt. 5:3-6)

2. YHWH (MT has *Adon* but some Hebrew MSS have YHWH)
 - a. his help (BDB 740 I)
 - b. his deliverer (BDB 812, KB 930, *Piel* PARTICIPLE)

▣ **“O my God”** In this Psalm YHWH and *Elohim* are used often and combined in 40:5.

1. YHWH, vv. 1,3,4,9,11,13 (twice),16
2. *Elohim*, vv. 3,5,8,17

See Special Topic at Psalm 1:1 for a detailed discussion of how the OT writers used these designations/titles/names for Deity to assert different aspects of His character and actions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe the mood of verses 1-10; and then verses 11-17. What has changed?
2. List and explain the attributes of YHWH in verses 10-11.
3. How is the imagery of walking used to describe the life of faith?
4. Does verse 5 allude to Genesis or Exodus, or both? Why?
5. How can the LXX translation of v. 6b (cf. Heb. 10:5-7) be so different from the MT?
6. Is this a Messianic Psalm?
7. What “book” or “scroll” is verse 7b talking about?
8. Explain why verses 13-17 reappear in Psalm 70.

PSALM 41

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Psalmist In Sickness Complains of Enemies and False Friends <u>MT Intro</u> "For the choir director. A Psalm of David"	The Blessing and Suffering of the Godly	Prayer For Healing From Sickness (A Lament)	A Prayer In Sickness	Prayer of a Sufferer Deserted
41:1-3	41:1-3	41:1-3	41:1-3	41:1-3
41:4-9	41:4-6 41:7-9	41:4-10	41:4-9	41:4-9
41:10-12	41:10-12	41:11-12	41:10-13	41:10-12
41:13	41:13	41:13		41:13

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:1-3

- ¹How blessed is he who considers the helpless;
The LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble.
- ²The LORD will protect him and keep him alive,
And he shall be called blessed upon the earth;
And do not give him over to the desire of his enemies.
- ³The LORD will sustain him upon his sickbed;
In his illness, You restore him to health.

41:1-3 This first strophe is describing the blessings (BDB 80, see note at Ps. 1:1) of the person who obeys the Law of Moses, which requires Israel to be kind, supportive, and attentive to those in need (BDB 195, cf. Exod. 23:5; Lev. 14:21; Ps. 72:13; 82:3; 113:7; Pro. 19:17; 21:13; 28:3,8; 29:7,14). Those who help them are, in reality, helping their God (see Jesus' discussion about the last judgment in Matt. 25:31-46).

The type of persons described by this term.

1. widow (cf. Exod. 22:22; Deut. 10:18; 24:17-18; 27:19; Ps. 68:5)
2. orphan
3. alien (cf. Lev. 19:33-34; Exod. 22:21-22; Deut. 24:17-18; 27:19)
4. blind/lame
5. socially powerless (landless)
6. bereft of worldly provisions (no necessary things for life—food, shelter, work, etc.)

Notice what YHWH will do for an obedient covenant follower (helping the poor is just one item but it stands here for the whole law).

1. YHWH will deliver him in a day of trouble
2. YHWH will protect him
3. YHWH will keep him alive
4. he will be called “blessed” (MT has IMPERFECT but the Masoretic scholars thought the PERFECT with a *waw* was better; the meaning does not change)
5. YHWH will not give him over to his enemies
6. YHWH will sustain him upon his sickbed
7. YHWH will restore him to health

Notice all the IMPERFECT VERBS, denoting ongoing actions by God throughout life.

Just a note about the general statements like this in Wisdom Literature. This should not be understood as a promise that affects every person, every time, who helps the poor. This is a general statement. This is true the majority of the time but not each and every time. We live in a fallen world!

This is a good illustration of Matthew 7. How one lives, how one speaks, how one allocates his resources and time reveal the priority commitment of the heart!

41:2 “upon the earth” The Hebrew word “land” (BDB 75) can mean

1. field
2. district
3. country
4. area
5. world

See Special Topic at Ps. 1:2. Only context can tell. I have been convinced by Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* that the flood of Genesis 6-9 was local because of the use of this word in that context. See my commentary on Genesis 1-11 online free at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:4-9

⁴As for me, I said, “O LORD, be gracious to me;
Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You.”

⁵My enemies speak evil against me,
“When will he die, and his name perish?”

⁶And when he comes to see *me*, he speaks falsehood;
His heart gathers wickedness to itself;
When he goes outside, he tells it.

⁷All who hate me whisper together against me;

Against me they devise my hurt, *saying*,
⁸“A wicked thing is poured out upon him,
 That when he lies down, he will not rise up again.”
⁹Even my close friend in whom I trusted,
 Who ate my bread,
 Has lifted up his heel against me.

41:4-9 The logical connection between these strophes is not stated. Possibly the author was a man like the one described in verses 1-3, but his life was in distress and under attack from others. Apparently he recognized that he had sinned (v. 4). Many of the last psalms of Book I (Psalm 1-41) mention a confession or acknowledgment of sin.

There are several problems mentioned.

1. he is sick of body and spirit
2. he has enemies who slander him (vv. 5-7)
3. they are planning evil against him (vv. 7-8)
4. his enemies were at one time close friends (v. 9; cf. Ps. 35:11-16; 55:12-13,20). This is quoted in John 13:18 about Judas' betrayal of Jesus.

41:7 “whisper together” This VERB (BDB 538, KB 527, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT) can be used of curses/charms (cf. Ps. 58:5; Eccl. 10:11; Isa. 3:2-3) or it could just be people speaking in a low voice so as not to be heard (cf. 2 Sam. 12:19) or a low voice in prayer (cf. Isa. 26:16).

If it does refer to a curse in this context, verse 8 is the result.

41:8

NASB “a wicked thing is poured out upon me”
NKJV “an evil disease, *they say*, clings to him”
NRSV “they think a deadly thing has fastened on to him”
TEV “They say, ‘He is fatally ill’”
NJB “a fatal sickness has a grip on him”
REB “an evil spell is cast on him, they say”

The term “wicked” (BDB 116) later became the title *Belial* (i.e., Deut. 13:13; 2 Cor. 6:15). It was used in several senses, a good sample is in 1 Sam. 1:16; 2:12; 25:17.

The usage here seems to be a personification of a disease which they would have seen as being sent by YHWH because of the sin of the psalmist (cf. Job's three friends). But YHWH's actions toward him in 41:10-12 show that their statements are lies/slander.

41:9 “Has lifted his heel against me” This act of cultural rejection (notice there is no parallel passage) came after a fellowship/covenant meal (cf. Gen. 26:28-30; 31:51-54; Exod. 12:18; 24:5; Ps. 69:23).

It is possible to see this as

1. an act of aggression/violence against the psalmist (i.e., stomped with the feet)
2. an act of insult expressed by a gesture. In the Middle East it is still a strong insult to show someone the bottom of one's shoe.

The rejection is all the more poignant because of the apparent friendship between the two of them.

▣ **“my close friend”** This is literally “man of peace who turned out to be a child of *Belial*” (v. 8a).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:10-12

- ¹⁰But You, O LORD, be gracious to me and raise me up,
That I may repay them.
¹¹By this I know that You are pleased with me,
Because my enemy does not shout in triumph over me.
¹²As for me, You uphold me in my integrity,
And You set me in Your presence forever.

41:10-12 In verse 4 there were two requests (IMPERATIVES).

1. be gracious to me – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. heal my soul (*nephesh*, see note at Ps. 3:2) – BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Now in the next strophe there are two IMPERATIVES and a COHORTATIVE.

1. same as #1 above, 41:4
2. raise me – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (same request, different but parallel VERB from #2 above), 41:4
3. that I may repay them – BDB 1022, KB 1532 *Piel* COHORTATIVE; the psalmist wants to be YHWH's instrument of justice

Healing will be a visible evidence that YHWH has heard and answered his prayers. It is not just the visible manifestation of YHWH that rejoices the psalmist but

1. it is a sign YHWH is pleased (BDB 342, KB 339, *Qal* PERFECT) with him
2. YHWH has upheld (BDB 1069, KB 1751, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 63:8) his integrity (BDB 1070), which means innocence (cf. Ps. 25:21; 101:2; Pro. 10:9; 19:1; 20:7; 28:6)
3. YHWH set him (BDB 662, KB 714, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT with *waw*) in His presence (i.e., tabernacle/temple, cf. Ps. 16:11; 23:6; 27:4-6) forever (see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:13

- ¹³Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
From everlasting to everlasting.
Amen and Amen.

41:13 This is a doxological, liturgical close (cf. Ps. 72:18-19; 89:52; 103:19-22; 106:48; 150:6). It probably was not originally part of Psalm 41, but a general close to the first book (Psalm 1-41) of the Psalter.

1. Psalm 72:18-19 ends Book II
2. Psalm 89:52 ends Book III
3. Psalm 106:47-48 ends Book IV
4. Psalm 150:6 ends Book V

▣ “Amen, and Amen” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

I. OLD TESTAMENT

- A. The term “Amen” is from a Hebrew word for
1. “truth” (*emeth*, BDB 49)
 2. “truthfulness” (*emun*, *emunah*, BDB 53)

3. “faith” or “faithfulness”
4. “trust” (*dmn*, BDB 52)
- B. Its etymology is from a person’s stable physical stance. The opposite would be one who is unstable, slipping (cf. Psalm 35:6; 40:2; 73:18; Jeremiah 23:12) or stumbling (cf. Ps. 73:2). From this literal usage developed the metaphorical extension of faithful, trustworthy, loyal, and dependable (cf. Gen. 15:6; Hab. 2:4).
- C. Special usages
 1. a pillar, 2 Kgs. 18:16 (1 Tim. 3:15)
 2. assurance, Exod. 17:12
 3. steadiness, Exod. 17:12
 4. stability, Isa. 33:6
 5. true, 1 Kgs. 10:6; 17:24; 22:16; Pro. 12:22
 6. firm, 2 Chr. 20:20; Isa. 7:9
 7. reliable (Torah), Ps. 119:43,142,151,160
- D. In the OT two other Hebrew terms are used for active faith.
 1. *bathach* (BDB 105), trust
 2. *yra* (BDB 431), fear, respect, worship (cf. Gen. 22:12)
- E. From the sense of trust or trustworthiness developed a liturgical usage to affirm a true or trustworthy statement of another (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; Neh. 8:6; Ps. 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48).
- F. The theological key to this term is not mankind’s faithfulness, but YHWH’s (cf. Exod. 34:6; Deut. 32:4; Ps. 108:4; 115:1; 117:2; 138:2). Fallen humanity’s only hope is the merciful faithful covenant loyalty of YHWH and His promises. Those who know YHWH are to be like Him (cf. Hab. 2:4). The Bible is a history and a record of God restoring His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in mankind. Salvation restores mankind’s ability to have intimate fellowship with God. This is why we were created.

II. NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The use of the word “amen” as a concluding liturgical affirmation of a statement’s trustworthiness is common in the NT (cf. 1 Cor. 14:16; 2 Cor. 1:20; Rev. 1:7; 5:14; 7:12).
- B. The use of the term as a close to a prayer is common in the NT (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; 6:18; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; 2 Thess. 3:18; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16; 2 Tim. 4:18).
- C. Jesus is the only one who used the term (often doubled in John) to introduce significant statements (cf. Luke 4:24; 12:37; 18:17,29; 21:32; 23:43)
- D. It is used as a title for Jesus in Rev. 3:14 (possibly a title of YHWH from Isa. 65:16).
- E. The concept of faithfulness or faith, trustworthiness or trust is expressed in the Greek term *pistos* or *pistis*, which is translated into English as “trust,” “faith,” “believe.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who is verse 1a referring to?
2. How are sin and sickness related?
3. Does verse 7 address gossip and slander or curses and charms?
4. What are “the wicked things” of verse 8?
5. How is verse 9 used in the NT?
What does it imply?
6. Exactly what is the psalmist asserting in verse 12? What does he want?
7. Why is verse 13 not part of the Psalm?

PSALM 42

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Thirsting For God in Trouble and Exile <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Maskil of the sons of Korah.	Yearning For God in the Midst of Distress	Prayer For Healing in Preparation for a Pilgrimage	Prayer of Someone in Exile	Lament of a Levite in Exile
42:1-4	42:1-3	42:1-3	42:1-3	42:1
				42:2
				42:3
	42:4	42:4-5b	42:4-5	42:4
42:5-8	42:5	42:5c-6a		42:5-6a
	42:6-8	42:6b-8	42:6-8	42:6b-d
				42:7
				42:8
42:9-11	42:9-10	42:9-10	42:9-10	42:9
				42:10
	42:11	42:11	42:11	42:11

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The first verse has always spoken deeply to me. This is the essence of what a personal relationship should be. But even this deep intimacy does not mean that problems, illness, vicious attacks do not occur. The great promise is not the absence of problems, but His presence (cf. Ps. 23:4; 16:8).
- B. I think the psalmist is in exile.
1. he cannot go to the temple, v. 4
 2. he longs for Canaan, v. 6
 3. he is being taunted by his captors, vv. 3, 10 (cf. Psalm 137, which is also an exilic Psalm).
The NASB Study Bible (p. 781) has an interesting suggestion that the psalmist was a Korahite Levite taken captive by Syria. It gives an example of a Syrian raid (e.g., 2 Kgs. 12:17-18). The Korahites lived in the northern area of Israel (cf. Jos. 2:4,9-19). This may explain
 1. the exile theory
 2. the northern geographical sites in verse 6
- C. The recurrent phrase is “in despair” (lit. “cast down,” BDB 1005, KB 1458, *Hithpolel* (IMPERFECT) occurs three times in this short poem, verses 5, 6, and 11. The psalmist is hurting inside (v. 5) and out (v. 10).
Also note the repetition of verses 5 and 11 with only slight changes. This same verse appears again in Ps. 43:5, which implies these Psalms are closely connected, possibly one Psalm (UBS *Handbook*, p. 398).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:1-4

- ¹As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So my soul pants for You, O God.
- ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;
When shall I come and appear before God?
- ³My tears have been my food day and night,
While *they* say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”
- ⁴These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me.
For I used to go along with the throng *and* lead them in procession to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

42:1-4 In this strophe one wonders what the problem is.

1. the psalmist feels cut off from YHWH
2. the psalmist cannot worship at the temple (cf. v. 4b,c)
3. the psalmist’s faith is being challenged by his current conditions (i.e., exile) and the taunting of his oppressors (vv. 3,10; 79:10; 115:2)

See Contextual Insights, B.

42:1

NASB, NKJV “pants”

NRSV, TEV,

LXX, REB “longs”

NJB “yearns”

JPSOA “crying”

This VERB (BDB 788, KB 881, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is found only three times in the OT, two here and one in Joel 1:20, where it is used of the beasts of the field.

Should the interpreter emphasize the deep desire of the psalmist for God (cf. Ps. 63:1) or his desire to be in the temple on a feast day (42:4)? I think option #2 fits the context better.

▣ “soul” This is the Hebrew term *nephesh* (BDB 659, cf. 42:2,4,5,6,11). See note at Psalm 3:2. It was an idiom of self reference.

▣ “the living God” This is a play on the words

1. live (VERB, חָיָה, BDB 310)

2. living (חַי, ADJECTIVE, BDB 311 I)

3. YHWH (יְהוָה, BDB 217, covenant name for Deity, cf. Gen. 2:4; see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1)

YHWH is the only-living, ever-living God (see Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7). All else is alive by Him, through Him, and for Him (cf. Ps. 18:46). This characterization of Israel’s God as “living” contrasts with the pagan idols that are blind, deaf, mute, and non-existent (cf. Isa. 4:9-20; Hab. 2:18-19).

42:2 “appear before God” This is an idiom for being in the temple on a feast day. The psalmist is being hindered from being in Jerusalem during feast days.

There is a question of how to understand the consonants.

1. NASB follows the MT, “appear before”

2. RSV changes the vowels to “and behold the face of God”

The UBS Text Project (p. 232) gives option #2 a “C” rating (i.e., considerable doubt).

42:3 “they” The text is not specific who this refers to.

1. captors

2. enemies

3. pagans

I think #1 fits the Psalm best. The NJB entitles this Psalm “Lament of a Levite in Exile.”

Notice the psalmist feels that these persons taunt him all day long (v. 3b; 79:10; 115:2).

42:4 Worship should be a joyful, anticipated experience. I hope your experience of worship can be so characterized!

The psalmist remembers his past worship times.

1. I remember – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* COHORTATIVE

2. I pour out my soul within me – BDB 1049, KB 1629, *Qal* COHORTATIVE

▣

NASB, NRSV

“throng”

NKJV

“multitude”

TEV, JPSOA

“crowds”

NJB

“under the roof”

LXX

“tent”

The word (BDB 697) translated “throng” occurs only here in the OT, but the same consonants can mean “thicket,” “cover,” “tent,” “booth.” The LXX saw the parallelism of the second option as the best way to interpret this word (so too, UBS Text Project notes, p. 233). For a good brief discussion see NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 247.

▣ **“lead them in procession”** There is some confusion on the meaning of this word.

1. “walk slowly” – BDB 186, KB 214, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT (psalmist was a Korahite Levite singer involved in the temple rites, songs, and liturgy, cf. 2 Chr. 20:19)
2. “of the majestic ones” – referring to the tent of place of worship (NJB, REB)
3. UBS Text Project (p. 234) gives a “C” rating (considerable doubt) to “I led them.”

The only difference in all three options is the vowel marks.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:5-8

⁵Why are you in despair, O my soul?

And *why* have you become disturbed within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him

For the help of His presence.

⁶O my God, my soul is in despair within me;

Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan

And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

⁷Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls;

All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me.

⁸The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime;

And His song will be with me in the night,

A prayer to the God of my life.

42:5-8 The psalmist tries to reassure himself. This is conveyed by two questions in verse 5. He answers the questions:

1. “hope” (“wait,” BDB 403, KB 407, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) in God
2. “I shall again praise Him – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) for the help of His presence”
3. “I remember (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERFECT) You from”
 - a. land of Jordan
 - b. peaks of Hermon (BDB 356, the name is PLURAL in the OT only here, therefore, “peaks”)
 - c. Mount Mizar (“little hill,” BDB 859, LXX) found only here in the OT. It could refer to
 - (1) small hill near Mt. Hermon
 - (2) a way of referring to Mt. Moriah, the site of the temple in Jerusalem

Hebrew poetry is slippery stuff! Its imagery is often vague (see Appendix: Hebrew Poetry at page xxi).

42:7 The imagery is powerful. The phrase “deep calls to deep” is moving but ambiguous. What waterfalls is he talking about?

1. the psalmist’s tears, 42:3
2. the Jordan River Valley and its origin in the mountains, 42:6

The next line implies it may be figurative of problems the psalmist is facing (cf. Ps. 69:1-2; 88:7). Notice they are YHWH’s

1. waterfalls
2. breakers

3. waves

that have rolled over (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* PERFECT) the psalmist! Faithful followers live in a fallen world but believe/trust that YHWH is “the God of my life” (42:9c). The “why” is unknown, but the “Who” is with us and this is certain!

The imagery of “water” in this Psalm is multi-fold.

1. water brooks, v. 1 (i.e., drought)
2. tears, v. 3 (i.e., pain)
3. a river (i.e., Jordan), v. 6
4. deep, v. 7
 - a. emotions
 - b. imagery from God’s defeat of chaos in Genesis 1
5. waterfalls (i.e., hiding place in the north may be under a waterfall)
6. breakers/waves (i.e., a flood of problems)

42:8 As the psalmist’s tears were his food day and night (v. 3), now YHWH’s (notice this is the only use of YHWH in the Psalm; Book 2 of the Psalter is dominated by the use of *Elohim* for Deity, as Book 1 by YHWH) lovingkindness and song are his companions.

▣ **“His song”** Is this the result of YHWH’s lovingkindness (*hesed*, see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7) or is it parallel to it? What is YHWH’s song? How is the psalmist’s prayer of line 3 related to “the song”? It probably refers to the content of the psalmist’s praises of YHWH’s mercy and faithfulness. The details of poetry are ambiguous. We must let the weight and feel of the strophe, and the parallelism of the lines guide us in an overall impression! Do not push the details! Do not build doctrine on isolated lines of poetry!

▣ **“the God of my life”** Faithful followers are not alone; there is purpose in their lives; there is a merciful Creator who is with them and for them! Nothing “just happens” to faithful followers (cf. Psalm 139).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:9-11

⁹I will say to God my rock, “Why have You forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”
¹⁰As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me,
While they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”
¹¹Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.

42:9-11 Do you see the intended parallel with verses 3 and 10; verses 5 and 11?

This is like a reinforcing summary. The psalmist feels alone (v. 9a), attacked (v. 9b), discouraged (v. 11a,b). How should he respond?

1. wait – same form as v. 5
2. praise – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
3. remember the God of verse 8 and his former worship times with Him in verse 4. Faith projects forward and builds on past acts of trust.

42:9 “my rock” See note at Psalm 18:2.

42:10 The words of his adversaries were so painful that the psalmist describes them as “death in his bones.” Words do hurt. They can destroy. They reveal the heart and one day every human will give an account to God for his/her words (cf. Matt. 12:36-37).

42:11d This last NOUN CLAUSE functions like the NOUN CLAUSE of verse 8c. It is an affirmation of God’s presence and care! He is with us and for us!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. In Book 2 (Psalms 42-72) of the Psalms there are two names for Deity that occur most often.
 - a. *Elohim*
 - b. YHWHExplain what they mean.
2. How is “living God” a play on YHWH?
3. Is the author
 - a. a Levite?
 - b. in exile?
4. Where is Mt. Mizar?
5. Who would say, “Where is your God?”
6. Why is it thought that Psalms 42 and 43 were once one Psalm?

PSALM 43

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer For Deliverance <u>No MT Intro</u> A continuation of Psalm 42	Prayer To God In Time of Trouble	Prayer For Healing In Preparation For a Pilgrimage	The Prayer of Someone in Exile	Lament of a Levite in Exile
43:1-2	43:1-2	43:1-2	43:1-2	43:1 43:2
43:3-4	43:3-4	43:3-4	43:3-4	43:3 43:4
43:5	43:5	43:5	43:5	43:5

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:1-2

¹Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case against an ungodly nation;

O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!

²For You are the God of my strength; why have You rejected me?

Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

43:1 Because of

1. the refrain in 42:5 and 11, which reoccurs in 43:5
2. no introduction in the MT in Psalm 43 (the only Psalm in Book 2 with no introduction)

this was probably part of Psalm 42 at one time but was divided for some unknown reason. The Jewish Study Bible's marginal note (p. 1330) suggests that the fact that Psalm 42 focuses on the past, while Psalm 43 focuses on the future, that may be a hint as to why and where they were divided!

▣ **“vindicate”** This VERB (BDB 1047, KB 1622, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 7:8; 26:1; 35:24) basically means “to judge.” The psalmist is using court language (cf. Ps. 17:1-3). YHWH is the righteous and fair judge of all human activity (i.e., Ps. 9:4).

▣ **“plead my case”** This is also a court metaphor (BDB 936, KB 1224, *Qal* IMPERATIVE). YHWH is the only fair and impartial judge! This same powerful court imagery is in Romans 8:31-39!

▣ **“an ungodly nation”** If it is true that Psalms 42 and 43 were originally one Psalm and that 42:6 means the author was in exile, then the “ungodly nation” would probably refer to Syria.

It is surprising that the next line uses the descriptive phrase, “the deceitful and unjust man!” One would have expected the PLURAL and a description that focused on idolatry or aggression.

43:2 Life is hard, unfair, and problems come unexpectedly. All of us wonder why.

1. have I offended God
2. have I violated God's law
3. is this a judgment for sin or a random occurrence of evil events and people in a fallen world?

The psalmist asks “Why” (v. 2), so do all humans!

Remember this is OT Wisdom Literature, which is a genre well known in the ANE. It addresses questions all humans ask. For Israel, the questions are related to YHWH and His revelations through Moses. The OT does not answer all the questions in the same way as the NT. There is a change.

1. progressive revelation
2. new covenant
3. the mystery of evil

▣ **“the God of my strength”** This is a recurrent refrain (BDB 731, i.e., a place of safety or protection, often translated “refuge,” cf. Ps. 27:1; 28:7-8; 31:2,4; 37:39; 52:7; Isa. 17:10; 25:4; 27:5; Jer. 16:19). Faithful followers can always know that YHWH is their hope, protection, and place of safety amidst the problems and conflicts of this fallen world. However, this peace must be embraced. It is a faith act and a worldview that is unrelated to the swirling circumstances of this present reality!

▣ **“Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”** This is very similar to Ps. 42:9.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:3-4

³O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me;
Let them bring me to Your holy hill
And to Your dwelling places.
⁴Then I will go to the altar of God,
To God my exceeding joy;
And upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God.

43:3 “send” This VERB (BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is a prayer request which personifies YHWH’s

1. light – BDB 21
 - a. as YHWH’s favor – Ps. 4:6; 44:3
 - b. as a guide – Micah 7:8
 - c. as eschatological light – Isa. 9:2 (first coming of Jesus); Isa. 60:19-20 (second coming of Jesus)
2. truth – BDB 54 (see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1)
 - a. an attribute of YHWH often translated “faithfulness” – Ps. 40:10; 71:22; 115:1; 138:2
 - b. often personified as YHWH’s agents or messengers – Ps. 40:11; 43:3; 57:3; 85:10; 89:14

Notice what “the light” and “the truth” are to do.

1. let them lead me – BDB 634, KB 685, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. let them bring me to Your holy hill – BDB 97, KB 112, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

▣ **“holy hill”** This is one of many ways to refer to the temple on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem. It is also called (usually with the ADJECTIVE “holy”):

1. Zion
2. house
3. sanctuary
4. habitation
5. temple
6. mountain
7. city of God

Here it is parallel to “Your dwelling places” (cf. Ps. 46:4; 84:1). The PLURAL denotes all the buildings of the temple complex or the PLURAL OF MAJESTY (cf. NIDOTE, vol. 2, p. 1132).

43:4 The psalmist desires to go (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* COHORTATIVE) to the temple and praise (BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense) God with his lyre (BDB 490, i.e., a stringed instrument, cf Ps. 33:2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:5

**⁵Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why are you disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.**

43:5 This is the repeated refrain from Ps. 42:5,11. This is what unifies these two psalms.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – see list at Psalm 42. These two Psalms are a literary unit.

PSALM 44

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Former Deliverance and Present Troubles <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Maskil of the sons of Korah	Redemption Remembered in Present Dishonor	Prayer For Deliverance From National Enemies	A Prayer For Protection	National Lament
44:1-3	44:1-3	44:1-3	44:1-3	44:1-2a 44:2b-3
44:4-8	44:4-8	44:4-8	44:4-8	44:4-5 44:6-8
44:9-16	44:9-16	44:9-12 44:13-16	44:9-12 44:13-16	44:9-10 44:11-12 44:13-14 44:15-16
44:17-19	44:17-19	44:17-19	44:17-19	44:17-19
44:20-26	44:20-22 44:23-26	44:20-22 44:23-26	44:20-22 44:23-24 44:25-26	44:20-22 44:23-24 44:25-26

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The opening strophes are contrasts between the failure of human plans and efforts and YHWH's effective and purposeful plans.
- B. In a way this Psalm is similar to
 - 1. Deuteronomy 32
 - 2. Nehemiah 9
 - 3. Psalm 78which are the history of Israel's faithlessness and YHWH's faithfulness during the early years (exodus, wilderness, conquest, judges).
- C. This Psalm obviously was written after Israel's experience of exile. Its focus is national not individual.
- D. It must be stated again and again that YHWH has an eternal redemptive purpose. Please look at the following Special Topics online (www.freebiblecommentary.org).
 - 1. YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan
 - 2. Why Do OT Covenant Promises Seem So Different From NT Covenant Promises?

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:1-3

¹O God, we have heard with our ears,
Our fathers have told us
The work that You did in their days,
In the days of old.
²You with Your own hand drove out the nations;
Then You planted them;
You afflicted the peoples,
Then You spread them abroad.
³For by their own sword they did not possess the land,
And their own arm did not save them,
But Your right hand and Your arm and the light of Your presence,
For You favored them.

44:1-3 This strophe recounts (PERFECT VERBS, cf. Deut. 32:7) all of YHWH's activities for Israel during the conquest of Joshua. This conquest fulfilled the promise of Gen. 15:12-21. Notice the Genesis passage emphasizes YHWH's role (i.e., holy war) in the promise. YHWH acted, Abraham slept! The conquest was YHWH's victory, not the Israelite military's (v. 3).

44:1 "we have heard" The Jewish annual feasts were occasions to instruct the new generations about God's saving activities (cf. Exodus 12; Deut. 6:20-25; note the recurrent phrase, "when your children ask. . .," cf. Exod. 12:26,27; 13:14-15; Deut. 6:20-25; Jos. 4:6-7,21-24). It is the spiritual responsibility of every generation of believers to instruct the new generation about God, His character, and redemptive acts.

44:2 “the nations. . .the peoples” This refers to the native tribes of Canaan. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PRE-ISRAELITE INHABITANTS OF PALESTINE

A. There are several lists of peoples.

1. Genesis 15:19-21 (10)

- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| a. Kenite | d. Hittite | g. Amorite | j. Jebusite |
| b. Kenizzite | e. Perizzite | h. Canaanite | |
| c. Kadmonite | f. Rephaim | i. Girgashite | |

2. Exodus 3:17 (6)

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| a. Canaanite | d. Perizzite |
| b. Hittite | e. Hivite |
| c. Amorite | f. Jebusite |

3. Exodus 23:28 (3)

- a. Hivites
- b. Canaanites
- c. Hittites

4. Deuteronomy 7:1 (7)

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| a. Hittites | d. Canaanites | g. Jebusites |
| b. Girgashites | e. Perizzites | |
| c. Amorites | f. Hivites | |

5. Joshua 24:11 (7)

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| a. Amorite | d. Hittite | g. Jebusite |
| b. Perizzite | e. Girgashite | |
| c. Canaanite | f. Hivite | |

B. The origin of the names is dubious because of lack of historical data. Genesis 10:15-19 includes several of them as related to Canaan, a son of Ham.

C. Brief descriptions from the longest list in Gen. 15:19-21

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1. Kenite | – BDB 884 |
| | – non-Israelite |
| | – names related to “forger” or “smith,” which could refer to metal working or music (cf. Gen. 4:19-22) |
| | – connected to the area of Sinai north to Hebron |
| | – name connected to Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law (cf. Jdgs. 1:16; 4:11) |
| 2. Kenizzite | – BDB 889 |
| | – relative of Jews |
| | – a clan of Edom (cf. Gen. 15:19) |
| | – lived in Negev |
| | – possibly absorbed into Judah (cf. Num. 32:12; Jos. 14:6,14) |
| 3. Kadmonite | – BDB 870 II |
| | – non-Israelite, possibly a descendant of Ishmael (cf. Gen. 25:15) |

- name relates to “easterner”
- lived in Negev
- possibly related to “the men of the east” (cf. Job 1:3)
- 4. Hittite
 - BDB 366
 - non-Israelite
 - descendant of Heth
 - from kingdom of Anatolia (Asia Minor, Turkey)
 - were present very early in Canaan (cf. Genesis 23; Jos. 11:3)
- 5. Perizzite
 - BDB 827
 - non-Israelite, possibly Hurrians
 - lived in forested area of Judah (cf. Gen. 34:30; Jdgs. 1:4; 16:10)
- 6. Rephaim
 - BDB 952
 - non-Israelite, possibly giants (cf. Gen. 14:5; Num. 33:33; Deut. 2:10-11,20)
 - lived on eastern bank of Jordan (cf. Gen. 15:20; Jos. 12:4; 13:12; Deut. 2:8-11,20; 3:13) or western bank (cf. Jos. 15:8; 17:15; 2 Sam. 5:18,22; 23:13; 1 Chr. 20:4)
- 7. Amorite
 - line of warriors/heroes
 - BDB 57
 - northwestern Semitic people-group from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:16)
 - became general designation for inhabitants of Canaan (cf. Gen. 15:16; Deut. 1:7; Jos. 10:5; 24:15; 2 Sam. 21:2)
 - the name may mean “the west”
 - the ISBE, vol. 1, p. 119, says the term denotes
 - a. the inhabitants of Palestine generally
 - b. the population of the hill country as opposed to the coastal plain
 - c. a specific people group with their own king
- 8. Canaanite
 - BDB 489
 - from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:15)
 - general designation of all the tribes in Canaan west of the Jordan
 - meaning of Canaan uncertain, possibly “merchant” or “red-purple dye”
 - as a people group they dwelt along the coastal plain (cf. Num. 13:29)
- 9. Gergashite
 - BDB 173
 - from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:16) or at least “from a son of [i.e., the country of] Canaan,” ISBE, vol. 2, p. 1232)
- 10. Jebusite
 - BDB 101
 - from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:16)
 - from city of Jebus/Salem/Jerusalem (cf. Jos. 15:63; Jdgs. 19:10)
 - Ezek. 16:3,45 asserts they were a mixed race from Amorite and Hittite
- 11. Hivites
 - BDB 295
 - from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:17)
 - translated by LXX as Horite (cf. Gen. 34:2; 36:20-30; Jos. 9:7)

- possibly from the Hebrew word “cave,” therefore cave dwellers
- they lived in the highlands of Lebanon (cf. Jos. 11:3; Jdgs. 3:3). In 2 Sam. 24:7 they are listed next to Tyre and Sidon

▣ **“You planted them”** In context this still refers to the Canaanite tribes (cf. LXX). The OT viewed YHWH as the establisher of all people groups (cf. Deut. 32:8). Genesis 15:12-21 asserts that the inhabitants of Canaan were expelled because of their sins; when Israel sins she will be expelled also (cf. Psalm 78).

The TEV, REV, and NET Bible assume that verse 2 relates to

1. the Canaanite people, 44:2a,c
2. the Israelites under Joshua, 44:2b,d (cf. Exod. 15:17; Jer. 45:4)

44:3 It was not Israel’s military but YHWH’s power to accomplish His purposes that allowed Israel to leave Egypt, travel to Canaan, and dispossess the native tribes!

Notice the parallelism between

1. Your right hand
2. Your arm
3. the light of Your presence

Number 3 would refer to the *Shekinah* Cloud of Glory during the Wilderness Wandering Period.

▣ **“You favored them”** This is the purpose of YHWH’s promise to Abraham.

1. a seed (i.e., descendants)
2. a land
 - a. Abraham – Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18
 - b. Israel – Gen. 26:3
 - c. Jacob – Gen. 28:13

The VERB “favored” (BDB 953, KB 1280, *Qal* PERFECT) denotes the covenant purpose (cf. Gen. 12:3) of bringing all peoples to Himself (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan at Psalm 2, Intro.). YHWH chose to use Abraham and his seed (cf. Deut. 4:37; 7:7-8; 10:15) to reach all the sons and daughters of Adam.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:4-8

⁴You are my King, O God;

Command victories for Jacob.

⁵Through You we will push back our adversaries;

Through Your name we will trample down those who rise up against us.

⁶For I will not trust in my bow,

Nor will my sword save me.

⁷But You have saved us from our adversaries,

And You have put to shame those who hate us.

⁸In God we have boasted all day long,

And we will give thanks to Your name forever.

Selah.

44:4-8 If the first strophe, dominated by PERFECT VERBS, denotes the past, this one, dominated by IMPERFECTS, denotes the present. Both deal with the concept of “holy war” or “God as Warrior.” YHWH (or His name, vv. 5,8) is the source of Israel’s victories, not their military.

44:4 “You are my King” YHWH as king probably comes from 1 Sam.8:7. The Israelite king was only an earthly representative of YHWH’s rule and reign (cf. Isa. 24:23; 52:7; 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1). In Jewish literature and ritual, YHWH is called “King of the Universe.”

▣ **“Command victories for Jacob”** This is an IMPERATIVE OF REQUEST (BDB 845, KB 1010, *Piel* IMPERATIVE).

The word “victories” is literally “salvation” (BDB 447). In the OT it denotes deliverance from physical problems and enemies.

It is possible that the ending letter on *Elohim* could go with the next word, making it “my Commander” (AB, p. 265), which would be parallel to “My King.” AB thinks the next phrase should also be a parallel title, “the Savior of Jacob.”

▣ **“for Jacob”** This is an allusion to YHWH’s promises to the Patriarchs (i.e., Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, cf. Genesis 12-35). YHWH has an eternal revelatory, redemptive purpose for the whole world in which Israel and Jesus are key components (see Special Topic at Psalm 2, Intro.)!

44:8 Notice the parallelism of verse 8.

1. boasted – give thanks
2. all day long – forever

▣ **“Selah”** See Introduction to Psalms, VII and note at Ps. 3:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:9-16

- ⁹**Yet You have rejected *us* and brought us to dishonor,
And do not go out with our armies.**
- ¹⁰**You cause us to turn back from the adversary;
And those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves.**
- ¹¹**You give us as sheep to be eaten
And have scattered us among the nations.**
- ¹²**You sell Your people cheaply,
And have not profited by their sale.**
- ¹³**You make us a reproach to our neighbors,
A scoffing and a derision to those around us.**
- ¹⁴**You make us a byword among the nations,
A laughingstock among the peoples.**
- ¹⁵**All day long my dishonor is before me
And my humiliation has overwhelmed me,**
- ¹⁶**Because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles,
Because of the presence of the enemy and the avenger.**

44:9-16 This strophe is a stark reversal of 44:1-3 and 4-8. Instead of YHWH fighting for Israel (i.e., 44:9b; Ps. 60:10; 108:11), He is fighting against them. It does not specifically mention why, but the problem was covenant disobedience and its consequences (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30).

The terrible consequences were not just military defeat but exile, slavery, humiliation!

44:9 “You have rejected us” This VERB (BDB 276, KB 276, *Qal* PERFECT) is used often in the Psalms where YHWH rejects His covenant people (cf. Ps. 44:9,23; 60:1,10; 74:1; 77:7; 108:11). The reason why is the big question.

1. covenant disobedience (i.e., Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30)
2. their relationship with YHWH (i.e., Job, Psalm 73, Habakkuk)
3. a test of their loyalty not related to blessings (see Special Topic: God Tests His People at Ps. 11:4b-5)

The Psalm does not answer this, unless 44:22 is the key to the whole Psalm.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:17-19

¹⁷**All this has come upon us, but we have not forgotten You,
And we have not dealt falsely with Your covenant.**

¹⁸**Our heart has not turned back,
And our steps have not deviated from Your way,**

¹⁹**Yet You have crushed us in a place of jackals
And covered us with the shadow of death.**

44:17-19 This strophe is an attempt to accept responsibility. Israel is claiming innocence.

1. we have not forgotten You
2. we have not dealt falsely with Your covenant
3. our heart (collective) has not turned back
4. our steps have not deviated from Your way

This claim of innocence is continued in the next strophe (cf. vv. 20-22). This may be true for some Israelites but not for the majority of them, for the majority of their history (cf. Deuteronomy 32; Psalm 78; Nehemiah 9).

Verse 19 is theologically similar to Job where he was willing to make God look bad to enhance his own case. The psalmist is accusing God of acting against them in an unfair manner!

For a different interpretation see Derek Kidner, Tyndale OT Commentaries, vol. 15, pp. 185-186.

44:17 “Your covenant” See Special Topic at Ps. 25:10.

44:19

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, NJB “jackals”

JPSOA, REB “sea monster”

The difference between these two is one consonant.

1. jackal – BDB 1072, תנים
2. sea monster – BDB תנין

The UBS Text Project (p. 237) gives “jackal” a “B” rating (some doubt). The JPSOA gives Ezek. 29:3; 32:2, as parallel passages for *tannin* (i.e., “sea monster,” cf. Gen. 1:21; Job 7:12).

From the Canaanite literature desert creatures are often used as figurative language for the demonic of a nation (cf. Isa. 13:21-22; 34:11-15; Jer. 9:11; Mic. 1:8; Zeph. 2:4).

▣ **“the shadow of death”** See note at Ps. 23:4. YHWH has abandoned His covenant people to the demonic forces of pagan religions and the realm of death!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:20-26

²⁰**If we had forgotten the name of our God
Or extended our hands to a strange god,
²¹Would not God find this out?
For He knows the secrets of the heart.
²²But for Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.
²³Arouse Yourself, why do You sleep, O Lord?
Awake, do not reject us forever.
²⁴Why do You hide Your face
And forget our affliction and our oppression?
²⁵For our soul has sunk down into the dust;
Our body cleaves to the earth.
²⁶Rise up, be our help,
And redeem us for the sake of Your lovingkindness.**

44:20 This is a specific denial of idolatry. They assert that if they were idolatrous, YHWH would surely have known (v. 21, cf. Ps. 7:9; 17:3; 26:2; 66:10; 139:23; Jer. 11:20; 17:10; 20:12).

▣ **“extended our hands”** This is literally “spread forth” (BDB 831, KB 975, *Qal* IMPERFECT). This was a physical gesture of worship, usually denoting prayer (cf. Exod. 9:29; 2 Chr. 6:12; Ezra 9:5; Job 11:13; Ps. 28:2; 48:31; 88:9; 134:2; 141:2; 143:6), but could include offering (i.e., lifting up) some type of sacrifice (animal, incense, vegetable, or wine).

44:22 This is a claim, like v. 19, that YHWH has abandoned Israel (cf. UBS *Handbook*, p. 409). Paul makes use of this verse in Rom. 8:36, and seems to indicate that God’s people face problems in a fallen world but He is with them and for them. Nothing can separate us from God’s love in Christ (cf. Rom. 8:38-39).

▣ **“for Your sake”** Some have seen this phrase as the key theological thrust of the Psalm. God’s people are persecuted, not because of their sin, but because of their relationship to Him. This motif is clearly seen in the life of Jesus.

I am just not sure there is enough textual evidence from this Psalm to make this claim!

44:23-26 This is seen as a separate strophe by NKJV, NRSV. There is a series of prayer requests (IMPERATIVES and JUSSIVES).

1. arouse Yourself, v. 23 – BDB 734, KB 802, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 7:6; 35:23
2. awake – BDB 884, KB 1098, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 35:23
3. do not reject us forever – BDB 276, KB 276, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 77:7
4. rise up – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 3:7; 7:6; 9:19; 10:12; 17:13; 74:22; 82:8; 132:8
5. redeem us – BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 25:22; 130:8 (see Special Topic at Ps. 19:14)

44:23 “why do You sleep, O Lord?” This is an idiomatic anthropomorphic phrase (cf. Ps. 78:65). YHWH (here called *Adonia*) does not sleep (cf. Ps. 121:4), but at times because of Israel’s sin, He seems to remove Himself from fellowship with them (cf. vv. 24-25).

For a good brief discussion see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, “Does God Sleep?” (pp. 268-269).

44:24 “do not reject us forever” “Forever” is another idiom referring to fellowship (cf. Ps. 103:9). It seemed forever to them! But it was simply a period of disfellowship so as to engender repentance and restore long term fellowship.

44:25 This is imagery for people praying, either on their knees or prostrate on the ground. This was an unusual position of prayer, which was usually standing with hands lifted and eyes open, looking up. Solomon prayed on his knees (cf. 2 Chr. 6:13); Daniel prayed on his knees (cf. Dan. 6:10); Jesus prayed on His face in Gethsemane (cf. Matt. 26:39)! It is a way to denote intensity!

44:26 “for the sake of Your lovingkindness” YHWH acts for

1. His love for their fathers (i.e., the Patriarchs)
2. His promise to their fathers
3. His wider purpose of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen. 12:3; see Special Topic at Psalm 2, Intro)
4. His covenant loyalty (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7) to His word (cf. Ps. 6:4; 109:21,26; 119:149)

It was not because of Israel’s goodness (cf. Deut. 9:4-6; Ezek. 36:22-38).

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH’S GRACE ACTS TO ISRAEL

It must be stated clearly that the Exodus, the Wilderness Wandering, and the Conquest were grace acts on YHWH’s part, not merited rewards due to Israel’s actions:

1. It was YHWH’s love for “the fathers” – Deut. 4:37-38; 7:8; 10:15
2. It was not Israel’s numerical strength – Deut. 7:7
3. It was not Israel’s strength and power – Deut. 8:17
4. It was not Israel’s righteousness or uprightness – Deut. 9:5-6
5. YHWH continues to love Israel even amidst judgment – Jer. 31:3

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What aspect of the covenant is brought into question in this Psalm?
2. What does this Psalm teach about the political structure of Israel?
3. Why has Israel been defeated?
4. Why is God asked to respond?

PSALM 45

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Song Celebrating the King's Marriage <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; according to Shoshannim, A Maskil of the sons of Korah. A Song of Love.	The Glories of the Messiah and His Bride	An Ode For a Royal Wedding	A Royal Wedding Song	Royal Wedding
45:1-2	45:1-5	45:1	45:1	45:1
		45:2-3	45:2-3	45:2
45:3-5				45:3a-4a
		45:4-5	45:4-5	45:4b-5
45:6-9	45:6-9	45:6-9	45:6-9	45:6-7a
				45:7b-8a
				45:8b-9
45:10-12	45:10-12	45:10-13a	45:10-12	45:10-13a
45:13-15	45:13-17	45:13b-15	45:13-15	45:13b-16
45:16-17		45:16-17	45:16-17	
				45:17

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is praising an Israeli King.
 - 1. probably Solomon at the time of one of his marriages (NASB margin)
 - 2. Ahab and his marriage to Jezebel (Jewish Study Bible, p. 1332)
 - 3. David (Ibn Ezra)
 - 4. Messiah (Ibn Ezra's second choice and the Church Fathers)
- B. This Psalm has been viewed by some as Messianic (notice the capitalized PRONOUNS) but only in a typological sense. Historically it fits
 - 1. the hyperbolic royal language of the ANE
 - 2. a marriage of Solomon would have been attended by the people groups his empire controlled
- C. All Israeli Kings were meant to represent YHWH (cf. 1 Sam. 8:6-7). He is the King of the Universe and they are to lead His people (by example) in His law.
- D. The NASB Study Bible (p. 784) assumes the author was a Levitical singer and that as such his song was considered as coming from the temple (i.e., from God Himself). This is how the fluidity of terminology between God and the King is to be explained.
- E. The Psalm has
 - 1. a related opening (vv. 1-2) and close (vv. 16-17)
 - 2. an address to the king, vv. 3-9
 - 3. an address to the bride, vv. 10-15

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:1-2

**¹My heart overflows with a good theme;
I address my verses to the King;
My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.
²You are fairer than the sons of men;
Grace is poured upon Your lips;
Therefore God has blessed You forever.**

45:1 The author describes himself to his readers (only here in the Psalter) in this verse.

- 1. his heart (i.e., he himself) overflows (BDB 935, KB 1222, *Qal* PERFECT; LXX has “erupts”) with a good theme (i.e., praise for the King of God's people)
- 2. he writes to praise the King on his marriage
- 3. his tongue is the pen of a ready writer (i.e., [1] he was eager to praise the King or [2] he was a court poet or scribe, cf. Ezra 7:6)

45:2 He describes the King in poetic imagery.

- 1. he is fairer (i.e., “more handsome,” cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB; this word [BDB 421, KB 421] is rarely used of men; it is in a rare form – *Pealal* PERFECT) than other men (lit. “the sons of men”)
- 2. his speech is eloquent (TEV) and gracious (cf. Pro. 22:11; Eccl. 10:12); I think v. 4c is parallel

3. therefore, God has blessed You forever – two thoughts about this
 - a. be cognizant of ANE hyperbolic, royal language
 - b. be careful of cause and effect logic (i.e., YHWH blessed him because he acted appropriately). There is a tension in Scripture between God’s sovereignty and human free will (see Special Topic at Ps. 25:12). Obedience is important but call is crucial. He was not King because he deserved it but by family line.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:3-5

³**Gird Your sword on *Your* thigh, O Mighty One,
In Your splendor and Your majesty!**

⁴**And in Your majesty ride on victoriously,
For the cause of truth and meekness *and* righteousness;
Let Your right hand teach You awesome things.**

⁵**Your arrows are sharp;
The peoples fall under You;
*Your arrows are in the heart of the King’s enemies.***

45:3-5 This strophe is poetic imagery about the King’s military victories. Notice he represents YHWH as he fights for the cause of (LXX)

1. “truth” (BDB 54)
2. “meekness” (unusual vowel pointing, BDB 776, cf. Pro. 15:33; 18:12; 22:4; Zeph. 2:3)

Notice the three IMPERATIVES and two JUSSIVES which reflect military imagery.

1. “gird Your sword on *Your* thigh” – BDB 291, KB 291, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 3, cf. Deut. 1:41; Jdgs. 3:16; 18:11; 1 Sam. 17:39; 25:13
- 2-3. “ride on victoriously,” v. 4
 - a. “be successful!” – BDB 852, KB 1026, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. “ride” – BDB 938, KB 1230, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. “let Your right hand teach,” v. 4 – BDB 434, KB 436, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
5. “let the peoples fall under You,” v. 5 – BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

45:3 “Splendor” (BDB 217 I) and “majesty” (BDB 214) are often associated with God (i.e., Ps. 104:1). Notice how NASB capitalizes the PRONOUNS in 45:2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9. But they are also used of the Israeli King (i.e., Ps. 21:5).



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

“O Mighty One”

TEV

“Mighty King”

NJB

“Warrior”

JPSOA

“O hero”

REB

“warrior king”

LXX

“O powerful one”

This ADJECTIVE (BDB 150) basically means “strong,” or “mighty.” It was used of

1. human warriors – Gen. 10:9; Ps. 78:65; 120:4; 127:4; Eccl. 9:11; Song of Songs 3:7
2. Messiah – Isa. 9:5 (David as type – Ps. 89:20)

3. YHWH as faithful covenant warrior (i.e., holy war) – Neh. 9:32; Ps. 24:8; Isa. 10:21; Jer. 32:18
In this context it refers to the Davidic King as victorious warrior, empowered by YHWH.

45:4-5 The PRONOUNS are difficult to identify.

1. some refer to God
2. some to the King

This same confusion is in verses 6-7. The problem is that the author is describing the King as a representative of YHWH Himself. It is obvious how early Christian authors (i.e., Heb. 1:8-9) saw this as a Messianic Psalm. For them the Messiah had come and the OT pointed to Him (i.e., Jesus).

45:4

NASB, NKJV “awesome things”

NRSV “dread deeds”

TEV “great victories”

JPSOA, REB “awesome deeds”

LXX “marvelously”

This PARTICIPLE (BDB 431, KB 432, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) means “awe-inspiring deeds.”

1. God Himself – Deut. 1:19; 7:21; 10:20-21
2. His deeds – 2 Sam. 7:23; Ps. 145:6 (splitting the Red Sea, Ps. 106:22)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:6-9

⁶Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;

A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

⁷You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;

Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You

With the oil of joy above Your fellows.

⁸All Your garments are *fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia*;

Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made You glad.

⁹Kings' daughters are among Your noble ladies;

At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir.

45:6-9 Here again is a strophe that addresses both YHWH and His royal representative in a unified way.

45:6

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, LXX “Your throne, O God”

NRSV margin “Your throne is a throne of God”

TEV “The kingdom that God has given you”

NJB “Your throne is from God”

JPSOA, RSV “Your divine throne”

REB “God has enthroned you”

NEB “Your throne is like God’s throne”

You can see from the variety of translations that the Hebrew text is uncertain (JPSOA footnote). In a monotheistic (see Special Topic at Ps. 2:7) OT context this cannot be asserting deity to the King, but it is asserting that all the King is and has comes from his relationship to YHWH. The King is YHWH’s earthly representative, as is the High Priest (cf. Zechariah 4).

YHWH's throne (cf. 1 Chr. 29:23; Lam. 5:19) is forever (cf. Ps. 93:2; see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5). The King's throne is for a lifetime. The Messiah is the special coming King (see Special Topic at Ps. 2:2). This phrase has one connotation in the OT and a fuller one in the NT!

45:7 One wonders if this is royal hyperbole or this Psalm truly addressed a godly King. If it is addressed to Ahab, it is royal hyperbole; if Solomon, it was true at first but not later; if David it was true at first and at last but not during his sinning period (i.e., Bathsheba, Uriah).

We must always be careful of attributing God's blessing based on human performance. God anointed the King for His own purposes of redemption and revelation (see Special Topic at Psalm 2 Intro.).

One last thought, verse 7 shows clearly that verse 6 is not attributing deity to an Israeli king. Hebrews 1:8-9 sees it as a Davidic royal typology!

▣ As YHWH loves righteousness (cf. Ps. 11:7; 33:5), so too, should His earthly representative, the Israeli king (i.e., His anointed, cf. Ps. 2:2).

45:8

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "cassia"

TEV, NJB,

REB -omit-

This spice (BDB 893 I) is mentioned only here in the OT. It may refer to a cinnamon fragrance.

45:9 Does this verse imply that at the current wedding there were already

1. royal daughters
2. other wives/concubines
3. a Queen (rare word, BDB 993, cf. Neh. 2:6)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:10-12

¹⁰**Listen, O daughter, give attention and incline your ear:**

Forget your people and your father's house;

¹¹**Then the King will desire your beauty.**

Because He is your Lord, bow down to Him.

¹²**The daughter of Tyre *will come* with a gift;**

The rich among the people will seek your favor.

45:10-12 This is the strophe that implies the marriage was with a foreign lady, which fits

1. David – if Bathsheba was not Jewish
2. Solomon – with his many foreign wives (cf. 1 Kgs. 11:1-8)
3. Ahab – marrying Jezebel, a Tyrian princess (note v. 12)

45:10 This verse has four IMPERATIVES.

1. listen – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. give attention (lit. "see") – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. incline your ear – BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Pro. 22:17
4. forget your people – BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:13-15

- ¹³**The King's daughter is all glorious within;
Her clothing is interwoven with gold.**
¹⁴**She will be led to the King in embroidered work;
The virgins, her companions who follow her,
Will be brought to You.**
¹⁵**They will be led forth with gladness and rejoicing;
They will enter in to the King's palace.**

45:13-15 This refers to the wedding party from the harem ("virgins"). The other wives (besides the Queen) are called "daughters" (cf. vv. 9,10,12,13).

This strophe was spiritualized by the Church to refer to herself! This was also done with Song of Songs (Canticles).

45:14

NASB, NKJV "within"
JPSOA "inside"

The MT has "within" (פנימה, BDB 819, LXX), but some scholars suppose "pearls" (פנינים, BDB 819, cf. Job. 28:18; Pro. 3:15; 8:11; 31:10; Lam. 4:7).

The UBS Text Project gives the MT an "A" rating.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:16-17

- ¹⁶**In place of your fathers will be your sons;
You shall make them princes in all the earth.**
¹⁷**I will cause Your name to be remembered in all generations;
Therefore the peoples will give You thanks forever and ever.**

45:16-17 The UBS *Handbook*, p. 429, has a good summary.

"The poet concludes by addressing the king, promising him that he will have many sons who will, like his ancestors, also be kings and rule over the whole earth."

Verse 17 is a way of asserting that this Psalm will be around for a long time and keep the memory of the king alive.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is it thought this is a royal wedding song?
2. Does verse 6 refer to the Israeli king?
3. Why is it thought the bride is not from Israel?
4. Explain verses 16-17 in your own words.
5. Define “ ” and explain how Hebrews 1:8-9 is using it.
6. Why is this Psalm thought to be Messianic?

PSALM 46

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God the Refuge of His People <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Psalm of the sons of Korah, set to Alamoth. A Song.	God the Refuge of His People and Conqueror of the Nations	A Song of Zion Celebrating God's Ultimate Victory Over the Nations	God Is With Us	God Is With Us
46:1-3	46:1-3	46:1-3	46:1-3	46:1-3b 46:3c
46:4-7	46:4-6 46:7	46:4-7	46:4-6 46:7	46:4-6 46:7
46:8-11	46:8-9 46:10 46:11	46:8-11	46:8-10 46:11	46:8-10 46:11

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is the Scriptural inspiration for Martin Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."
- B. There is no known historical setting.

C. God is both

1. a fortress for protection (cf. vv. 7, 11)
2. a warrior who caused war to cease in all the earth (cf. v. 9)

However, the great blessing is not just His power, but

1. His presence (cf. v. 1b)
2. His universal purposes (cf. v. 10, see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan at Intro. to Psalm 2)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:1-3

¹God is our refuge and strength,

A very present help in trouble.

²Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change

And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;

³Though its waters roar *and* foam,

Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.

Selah.

46:1 “God” The second book of Psalms uses the title *Elohim* far more than YHWH. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Ps. 1:1.

▣ **“our refuge and strength”** These are recurrent descriptions of God (cf. Ps. 14:6; 18:1-2; 40:17; 62:7-8; 142:5).

46:2-3 The psalmist's faith assertion (i.e., “will not fear,” cf. Ps. 23:4; 27:1) is made amidst times of crises.

1. though the earth should change
2. though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea
3. though its waters roar (BDB 242, המה) and foam (BDB 330 I, חמר, sound play)
4. though the mountains quake at its swelling pride

These kinds of cataclysmic events could refer to

1. what happens when YHWH approaches His creation (i.e., “melts,” cf. Ps. 46:6b; 98:7-9; Micah 1:4)
2. metaphor for trouble (i.e., “tight places,” BDB 865 I, FEMININE NOUN, cf. Deut. 31:17,21; 1 Sam.10:19; Ps. 71:20; Pro. 1:27)

46:3 This verse has three IMPERFECTS (i.e., ongoing action).

1. waters roar – BDB 242, KB 250, *Qal*
2. waters foam – BDB 330, KB 330, *Qal*
3. mountains quake – BDB 950, KB 1271, *Qal*

The Jewish Study Bible (p. 1333) says this is “mythological language going back to Canaanite traditions. Before these myths were recovered, the psalm was often connected to the eschatological battles (so Rashi and Radak).”

The Anchor Bible (AB) on *The Psalms* by Mitchell Dahood, uses the literature of the *Ras Shamra* found at Ugarit to explain the Hebrew poetry and form of the Psalter. These Ugaritic texts are poetry about *Ba'al* and the Canaanite pantheon. Often Israel took the titles, imagery, and myths of the nations and changed them to extol their covenant Deity, YHWH, the one true God (see Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7)!

▣ **“Selah”** This term breaks the Psalm into three strophes.

1. vv. 1-3
2. vv. 4-7
3. vv. 8-11

For the possible meaning see notes at Ps. 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VIII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:4-7

⁴**There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
The holy dwelling places of the Most High.**

⁵**God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.**

⁶**The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered;
He raised His voice, the earth melted.**

⁷**The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.**

46:4-7 This strophe describes the tranquil peace surrounding God when the earth is in turmoil (i.e., Revelation 4-5).

1. a river continually flows (lit. “irrigation canal,” BDB 625, cf. Ps. 36:8; 65:9; Ezek. 47:1; Joel 3:18; Zech. 14:8; Rev. 22:1,17) in “the city of God” (cf. Ps. 48:1,8; 87:3; 101:8; Isa. 60:14; Rev. 3:12)
2. the city of God will not be moved (i.e., shaken) because YHWH is in her midst (cf. Hos. 11:9; Zech. 2:5; Heb. 11:10; 12:22; 13:14)
3. God will help her (cf. Ps. 37:40; Isa. 41:14) when morning dawns (imagery of perfect timing, cf. Ps. 5:3; 17:15; 30:5; 90:14). This “help” links with “the nations made an uproar” in v. 6a (same VERB in v. 3a, cf. Psalm 2). The “nations” are mentioned again in v. 10b. God’s purposes have always included the nations (see Special Topic at Psalm 2 Intro.)!
4. the city of God will not be moved (i.e., imagery of stability and continuance)

46:4b

NASB, JPSOA	“The holy dwelling places”
NKJV	“The holy <i>place</i> of the tabernacle”
NRSV	“the holy habitation”
TEV	“the sacred house”
NJB	“it sanctifies the dwelling”
LXX	“sanctified his covert”
REB	“the holy dwelling”

The MT (BDB 1015) has

1. tabernacle – Exod. 25:9; 26:30; 38:21; Num. 9:18,22; 40:34-35 (i.e., “tent of meeting”); Ps. 78:60
2. dwelling place
 - a. of Korah (i.e., tents) – Num. 16:24,27
 - b. of Jacob – Ps. 87:2
 - c. of YHWH (i.e., temple) – Ps. 26:8; 74:7
 - d. of YHWH (but PLURAL, i.e., all the buildings on the temple mount) – Ps. 43:3; 84:1; 132:5,7; Ezek. 32:27

The PLURAL could refer to

1. all the buildings of the temple
2. the PLURAL OF MAJESTY (i.e., most holy)

You can see from the translations that some change “holy” (ADJECTIVE, BDB 872) into the VERB “sanctify” (LXX, Vulgate, NJB), which is a change of only vowels.

▣ **“the Most High”** This title for Deity (*Elyon*, BDB 751 II, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1) is used in Gen. 14:18-22; Num. 24:15; and Deut. 32:8, but mostly (16 times) in the Psalms and in Daniel 7 (4 times). The basic meaning is “high.” It is used mostly by non-Israelites.

46:6 Notice the contrast between

1. the nations uproar, v. 6a (ineffective)
2. YHWH’s voice, v. 6b (effective)

The VERB “melted” (BDB 556, KB 555, *Qal* IMPERFECT) can be used

1. figuratively of enemies’ courage – Exod. 15:15; Jos. 2:9,11,24; Isa 14:31
2. figuratively of judgment – Amos 9:5
3. literally (i.e., final cleansing of earth) – 2 Pet. 3:10

46:7 This same promise,

1. YHWH of Hosts is with us (cf. Ps. 24:10; see Special Topic: Names For Deity at Ps. 1:1, cf. Num. 14:9; 2 Chr. 13:12)
2. God of Jacob is our stronghold (cf. Ps. 9:9; 48:3; 59:9,16,17)

is repeated in verse 11 for emphasis! These statements are the psalmist’s hope and YHWH’s promises to His people.

▣ **“is with us”** This is the greatest promise (cf. Num. 14:9; 1 Chr. 13:12; Ps. 9:10; 37:28; 94:14; Heb. 13:5 [from Deut. 31:6; Jos. 1:5]). We need God!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:8-11

⁸**Come, behold the works of the Lord,**

Who has wrought desolations in the earth.

⁹**He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;**

He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;

He burns the chariots with fire.

¹⁰**“Cease *striving* and know that I am God;**

I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

¹¹**The Lord of hosts is with us;**

The God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Selah.

46:8-11 This strophe reveals the purpose of God. Notice the two IMPERATIVES of verse 8 and the parallel ones of verse 10.

1. come – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 8
2. behold (lit. “see”) – BDB 302, KB 301, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 8, cf. Job 23:9; Ps. 63:2; Isa. 26:11; 33:17,20; 48:6
3. cease (YHWH speaks in v. 10) – BDB 951, KB 1276, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, v. 10 (i.e., in context a call to the world to stop fighting)

4. know – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 10 (i.e., YHWH’s power and deliverance; this is theologically parallel to #2)

YHWH causes all wars to cease to the ends of the earth! A new day is coming (i.e., the Prince of Peace, cf. Isa. 9:6; 66:12; John 14:27; 16:33; 20:19). A day of exaltation for the merciful God of creation. All nations will acknowledge Him (cf. Isa.2:2-4; 25:6-9; 56:6-8; Eph. 2:11-3:13). See Special Topic: YHWH’s Universal Redemptive Plan from Introduction to Psalm 2.

46:8 “desolations” The TEV has “come and see what the LORD has done. See what amazing things he has done on earth.” The word “desolations” (BDB 1031 I) is used only twice in the Psalms (here and 73:19), where it denotes destruction. The events of the exodus are called “amazing things” (see Special Topic at Ps. 9:1), so military destruction could be so characterized. The word appears most often in Jeremiah (24 times) and all of them denote destruction, ruin, horror, desolation. Apparently YHWH stops war by defeating the nations’ military (cf. v. 9; Psalm 2).

46:9

NASB, NKJV “chariots”

NRSV, TEV,
NJB, REB,

LXX “shields”

JPSOA “wagons”

It is uncertain if the Hebrew root is

1. “round” – BDB 222, עגל עגול (DSS, “round shield,” 1QM6:15)
2. “wheeled cart” – BDB 722, עגלה (never in MT as war chariot)

In this context a “round shield” fits best.

46:11 The parallelism demands a global emphasis! The wonderful city is for all (i.e., new Jerusalem, cf. Revelation 21-22!)

For “earth” (46:2,6,8,9,10) see Special Topic at Psalm 1:2.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is the imagery of verses 2-3 from end-time events or Canaanite mythology?
2. Explain the significance of a river flowing from God’s city.
3. How is verse 6 like Psalm 2?
4. To whom is YHWH speaking in verse 10?
5. Is verse 10 about the nations’ defeat or the nations’ inclusion into the people of God?

PSALM 47

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God the King of the Earth MT Intro A Song; a Psalm of the sons of Korah.	Praise to God, the Ruler of the Earth	A Hymn Celebrating God's Enthronement as King of All Nations	The Supreme Ruler	Yahweh, King of Israel, King of the World
4:1-4	47:1-4	47:1-4	47:1-4	47:1 47:2-3 47:4
47:5-9	47:5-7	47:5-7	47:5-7	47:5 47:6 47:7-8
	47:8-9	47:8-9	47:8-9	47:9

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm focuses on the universal exaltation of the Creator/Redeemer God. God reigns (cf. Ps. 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1; Isa. 52:7)!
- B. The how and when of this kingly affirmation is uncertain.
 1. represented in a Davidic King of Israel's annual coronation
 2. the end-time consummation of all things (cf. 1 Cor. 15:25-27)

3. the proper theology of God's place in creation (i.e., monotheism [see Special Topic at Ps. 2:7], He always has and always will reign)
- C. The universal elements of the Psalm are powerful pointers to God as Creator and King of the Universe.
1. all peoples, v. 1
 2. a great King over all the earth, v. 2b
 3. subdues peoples. . . nations, v. 3
 4. God reigns over the nations, v. 8 (cf. Ps. 22:28; 1 Chr. 16:31)
 5. the princes (nobles) of the people (i.e., not Israel, but Gentiles) have assembled themselves, v. 9
 6. the shields of the earth belong to God, v. 9
 7. also possibly the use of *Elyon*, which is a common designation for the high god of the ANE, implies YHWH's dominance of all other gods (idols, elohims, angels, etc.)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:1-4

**¹O clap your hands, all peoples;
Shout to God with the voice of joy.
²For the Lord Most High is to be feared,
A great King over all the earth.
³He subdues peoples under us
And nations under our feet.
⁴He chooses our inheritance for us,
The glory of Jacob whom He loves. Selah.**

47:1-2 Notice the names for Deity.

1. God – *Elohim*, vv. 1, 5, 6, 8 (twice), 10
2. Lord – YHWH, v. 2
3. Most High – *Elyon*, v. 2 (common name for high god in ANE, cf. Gen. 14:18-20,23; Num. 24:15; Deut. 32:8-9)
4. King – vv. 2, 6, 8 (“reigns,” cf. Zech. 14:9; Mal. 1:14)
5. God of Abraham – v. 10 (i.e., SINGULAR form of *Elohim*, cf. Deut. 32:15,17; Ps. 18:22)

Poetry often uses multiple names for Israel's Deity. Often it took titles and descriptions from other cultures and applied them to Israel's God. The second book of Psalms used *Elohim* predominately.

47:1 This Psalm begins with two IMPERATIVES admonishing the earth (i.e., “all peoples”) to loudly rejoice.

1. “clap your hands” – BDB 1075, KB 1785, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. shout to God – BDB 929, KB 1206, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
 - a. war cry – Num. 10:9; Jos. 6:20; Isa. 42:13; 2 Chr. 13:15
 - b. assembly – Num. 10:7
 - c. victory – Jer. 50:15; Zeph. 3:14
 - d. affirmation – 1 Sam. 10:24; Ps. 47:1; 66:1; 81:1; 95:1-2; 98:4; 100:1; Zech. 9:9
 - e. religious joy – 1 Sam. 4:5; Ezra 3:11,13
 - f. distress – Isa. 15:4; Micah 4:9

47:2 “feared” This VERB (BDB 431, KB 432, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) denotes

1. the wilderness that Israel passed through in the exodus, cf. Deut. 1:19; 8:15
2. causing astonishment – Ps. 47:2; 68:35; 76:8
3. inspiring reverence – Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4

Numbers 2 and 3 are very similar in meaning. He is the holy One, the only One and we are sinful creatures! But He has chosen to fellowship with us!

▣ **“over all the earth”** There seems to be a recurrent worldwide emphasis in Psalms 45-50 (cf. vv. 1, 7-9; Ps. 45:16; 46:10; 47:2; 48:2,10; 49:1; 50:1,4,12). This theme “may be” why these Psalms are placed together. See also Psalms 96-99.

The earth is the Lord’s (cf. Exod. 9:29; 19:5). He is the creator, sustainer (i.e., *Elohim*, Genesis 1), and covenant God (i.e., YHWH, Gen. 2:4). There is no other (see Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7)!

47:3-4 These verses emphasize the choice of Israel as YHWH’s special covenant people (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; Exod. 19:5-6). Israel was meant to be a light to the nations, but she failed (cf. Ezek. 36:22-23; see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan at Psalm 2 Intro.).

Israel’s military victories were YHWH’s victories (i.e., holy war).

47:4 “inheritance” In the division of the Promised Land (i.e., Joshua 12-19) the Levites were not given land (i.e., but 48 cities, cf. Joshua 20-21). It was said, “YHWH was their inheritance.” This wonderful promise was extended as a promise to all Israel and in 1 Pet. 1:4 to all believers!

It is also possible to see this as referring to Canaan (i.e., the Promised Land, Gen. 12:7; 15:12-21; 17:8; Exod. 3:8; Deut. 1:8). It seems that “inheritance” and “glory (BDB 144) of Jacob” are parallel. My reluctance to affirm this is the universal emphasis of the Psalm. The earth, not just Canaan, is the Lord’s!

▣ **“whom He loves”** In the OT, Israel has a central place, but in the NT the gospel of Jesus Christ has a central place (cf. John 3:16; 4:42; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; 1 John 2:1-2; 4:14). Christians must view/interpret the OT through the eyes of the NT, not vice versa!

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Ps. 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:5-9

⁵God has ascended with a shout,
The Lord, with the sound of a trumpet.

⁶Sing praises to God, sing praises;
Sing praises to our King, sing praises.

⁷For God is the King of all the earth;
Sing praises with a skillful psalm.

⁸God reigns over the nations,
God sits on His holy throne.

⁹The princes of the people have assembled themselves *as* the people of the God of Abraham,
For the shields of the earth belong to God;
He is highly exalted.

47:5-9 This strophe focuses on praise to God. Notice the words for vocal affirmation.

1. with a shout, v. 5

2. with the sound of a trumpet, v. 5
- 3-7. sing praises, vv. 6-7 – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, 5 times

Many scholars see 47:5-8 depicting an annual event, where the Israeli king ascended the throne as a symbolic representative of YHWH's universal reign (i.e., ark brought back to the temple after a procession, cf. 2 Sam. 6:15). However attractive this theory, there is little historical evidence.

47:5 “trumpet” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HORNS USED BY ISRAEL

There are four words in Hebrew associated with horns/trumpets:

1. “the ram’s horn” (BDB 901) – turned into an instrument of sound, cf. Jos. 6:5. This same word is used for the ram caught by his horns which Abraham substituted for Isaac in Gen. 22:13.
2. “trumpet” (BDB 1051) – from Assyrian term for wild sheep (ibex). This is the horn that was used in Exod 19:16,19 at Mt. Sinai/Horeb. #1 and #2 are parallel in Jos. 6:5. It was used to communicate times to worship and times to fight (i.e., Jericho was both, cf. Jos. 6:4).
3. “ram’s horn” (BDB 385) – from Phoenician word for ram (cf. Jos. 6:4,6,8,13). It also stands for the Year of Jubilee (cf. Lev. 25:13,28,40,50,52,54; 27:17,18,23,24).

(These first three seem interchangeable with no distinction intended. The Mishnah (RH 3.2) allowed any animal horn—sheep, goat, or antelope, but not from a cow.)

4. “trumpets” (BDB 348) – possibly from the VERB “stretch out,” implying a straight bone (not curved as the animal horns). These were made of silver (after the shape and form of Egypt). These are used:
 - a. with worship rites (cf. Num. 10:2,8,10; Ezra 3:10; Neh. 12:35,41)
 - b. for military purposes (cf. Num. 10:9; 31:6; Hosea 5:8)
 - c. for royal purposes (cf. 2 Kgs. 11:14)

One of these metal horns is depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome; also Josephus describes them in *Antiq.* 3.12.6.

47:7

NASB “skillful psalm”

NKJV “with understanding”

NRSV “with a psalm”

JPSOA “a hymn”

REB “with all your skill”

This term (BDB 968) is used in the MT titles of thirteen Psalms, but only here in the text of a Psalm. BDB says it means “contemplative poem”; KB gives

1. “cult song” (Kittel)
2. “wisdom song performed to music” (Mowinckel)

Derek Kidner, *Tyndale OT Commentaries*, vol. 15, p. 195, links this word (i.e., *Maskil*) to Paul’s statement in 1 Cor. 14:15. This is interesting but inconclusive. It is often very difficult to identify OT allusions in NT writings.

47:9 This verse implies that all the leaders (i.e., representing their people groups) gather together with Israel (i.e., the people of the God of Abraham, cf. Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Romans 4; Gal. 3:6-9).

The phrase “the shields” is a military imagery for the universal victory of YHWH (cf. Ps. 46:8-11).

YHWH's reign over all the earth is accomplished by His own acts ("highly exalted" – BDB 748, KB 828, *Niphal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 46:10; Isa. 2:11,17; also note John 3:14-15, where the word "lifted up" also means "highly exalted").

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What do Psalms 45-50 have in common?
2. List the titles for Deity and explain the meaning of each.
3. Whom is verse 9 speaking of?
4. List the universal elements of the Psalm. What do these imply?

PSALM 48

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Beauty and Glory of Zion <u>MT Intro</u> A Song; a Psalm of the sons of Korah	The Glory of God in Zion	A Song Celebrating the Beauty and Security of Zion	Zion, the City of God	Zion, the Mountain of God
48:1-3	48:1-3	48:1-3	48:1-3	48:1-3
48:4-8	48:4-7	48:4-8	48:4-7	48:4-5 48:6-7
	48:8		48:8	48:8
48:9-14	48:9-11	48:9-11	48:9-11	48:9-10b 48:10c-13b
	48:12-14	48:12-14	48:12-14	48:13c-14

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is about God's special city and people. He is with them and for them. See Isaiah 26, Contextual Insights, D. online at www.freebiblecommentary.org for the imagery of "city."
- B. Does this Psalm imply that Jerusalem in Israel will be the physical capital of the new age?
Using the terminology of this Psalm, how does one explain the capture, sacking, and occupying of Jerusalem by many different nations throughout history?

- C. I have struggled with this issue because it is the heart of millennial theories. Please see my conclusions in the Special Topic: OT Predictions of the Future versus NT Predictions (taken from my commentary on Revelation) at Psalm 37 Introduction.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:1-3

¹Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,
In the city of our God, His holy mountain.
²Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion *in* the far north,
The city of the great King.
³God, in her palaces,
Has made Himself known as a stronghold.

48:1-3 Notice the different ways Jerusalem and her different hills are characterized.

1. the city of our God, v. 1
2. His holy mountain, v. 1
3. beautiful in elevation (BDB 832, only here in the OT, possibly a superlative marker, most beautiful)
4. the joy of the whole earth, v. 2
5. Mount Zion in the far north (or “north” = Zaphon, the mountain of the Canaanite gods north of Ugarit, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, pp. 836), v. 2
6. the city of the great King, v. 2
7. God has made Himself known, in her palaces, as a stronghold, v. 3

These descriptions refer both to the temple on Mt. Moriah and the whole city of Jerusalem, often called Zion.

48:1 “the city of our God” This phrase can refer to several ideas.

1. the city linked to Melchizedek – Gen. 14:18 (i.e., Salem)
2. the city where YHWH caused His name to dwell – Deut. 12:5,11,21; 14:23,24; 16:2,6,11; 26:2
3. the city David captured from the Canaanites (i.e., Jebus), which later became his capital – 1 Sam. 5:7,9
4. the city linked to the angel of the Lord stopping the plague; purchased by David as site of the future temple – 2 Sam. 24:15-17,18-25; 2 Chr. 3:1 (i.e., Mt. Moriah, possible site of the offering of Isaac, Gen. 22:2)
5. Zion, same as Jebus – 2 Sam. 5:7; 1 Chr. 11:5 (i.e., way of referring to the whole city of Jerusalem, although it was built on seven hills, Zion became the common designation

The problem with Psalm 48 is verse 2, “Mount Zion in the far north.” These are only theories.

1. It is metaphorical for heaven where YHWH dwells – Isa. 14:13a,b; Rev. 3:12; 21:2,10
2. It, like other Psalms, incorporates some Canaanite mythological terminology (i.e., Zaphon = Hebrew “north,” BDB 8) – Isa. 14:13c,d; Ezek. 28:14

It was common in Ancient Near Eastern religious thought to view the gods as living on mountain tops (cf. Gilgamesh Epic). This is especially true for the Ugaritic *Ba'al* myth poems from Ras Shamra. The gods met and lived on a northern mountain called Saphon or Zaphon. *Ba'al* had a throne there built by Anath. The male god of Phoenician fertility worship was called *Baal Saphon*. This name has been found in Phoenician colonies around the Mediterranean. This

northern mountain tradition, totally unrelated to Israel's holy Mt. Moriah (cf. 20:40), seems to be the source of the imagery of both Isa. 14:13-15 and Ezek. 28:14,16. See Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 2, pp. 279-281.

3. Some scholars suggest a different division of the Hebrew consonants, "on the northern side of the city"

The concept of "city" as a way of referring to the place of YHWH's special presence continues in the NT.

1. Heb. 11:10 – "for he (Abraham) was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God"
2. Heb. 12:22 – "you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem"
3. Heb. 13:14 – "we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking *the city* which is to come"
4. Rev. 3:12 – "the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God"
5. Rev. 21:2,10 – "the city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God"

48:2 "mountains" For the ANE, mountains were the home of the gods. In Babylon, which had no natural mountain, they built elevated towers (i.e., ziggurat, cf. Gen. 11:3-4) for a place for heaven and earth to meet.

In Israel's history there are several significant mountains.

1. Mt. Sinai where YHWH met Israel and gave her the law (cf. Exodus 19-20)
2. Mt. Zion, the city of David (Salem [Genesis 14], later Jebus [2 Sam. 5:6-10])
3. Mt. Moriah, the location of the temple (cf. Genesis 22)
4. in this Psalm Mt. Zion is greater than Mt. Zaphon, the mountain of the Canaanite gods (equivalent to Mt. Olympus for the Greek pantheon) because YHWH is greater

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:4-8

⁴For, lo, the kings assembled themselves,
They passed by together.

⁵They saw *it*, then they were amazed;
They were terrified, they fled in alarm.

⁶Panic seized them there,
Anguish, as of a woman in childbirth.

⁷With the east wind
You break the ships of Tarshish.

⁸As we have heard, so have we seen
In the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God;
God will establish her forever.

Selah.

48:4-8 This strophe focuses on the effect that God's city has on the world (cf. vv. 2a; 10b). The imagery suggests fear and alarm based on God's power and presence in this special eternal city (cf. vv. 8b.c).

As the kings of the nations are antagonistic in Psalm 2, so too, here. There is a real conflict between the worldview of Scripture and the pagan worship of Gentiles. This unseen, but real, conflict is a part of every age and every culture. The conflict is the exclusivism of monotheism.

48:6 "a woman in childbirth" This is a common biblical metaphor of fear, pain, and sudden anguish (cf. Isa. 13:8; 21:3; 26:17; Jer. 4:31; Hos. 13:13; Micah 4:9; John 16:21; Mark 13:8; 1 Thess. 5:3).

48:7 “the east wind” This was a hot desert wind (i.e., sirocco, from Arabic term for “east”) that dried the crops, brought the locusts, and was a metaphor of destruction (cf. Jer. 18:17; Ezek. 17:10; Hos. 13:15; Jonah 4:8).

▣ **“the ships of Tarshish”** The exact location of Tarshish is uncertain, but a geographical location far to the west end of the Mediterranean, which would have denoted YHWH’s universal power, is suggested. These ships were the largest, safest, ocean-going vessels in the Mediterranean. They were symbols of power and commerce.

48:8 “Selah” See note at Ps. 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:9-14

⁹**We have thought on Your lovingkindness, O God,**

In the midst of Your temple.

¹⁰**As is Your name, O God,**

So is Your praise to the ends of the earth;

Your right hand is full of righteousness.

¹¹**Let Mount Zion be glad,**

Let the daughters of Judah rejoice

Because of Your judgments.

¹²**Walk about Zion and go around her;**

Count her towers;

¹³**Consider her ramparts;**

Go through her palaces,

That you may tell *it* to the next generation.

¹⁴**For such is God,**

Our God forever and ever;

He will guide us until death.

48:9-14 This strophe magnifies YHWH.

1. they continue to think of His lovingkindness (i.e., covenant loyalty, see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7)
2. His presence in the temple in Jerusalem
3. His name (character/acts) praised to the ends of the earth
4. His right hand (i.e., power, see Special Topic at Ps. 7:3-4) is full of righteousness (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5)
5. Judah’s cities (i.e., daughters) rejoice because of His judgments (see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5-6)
6. notice His beautiful city
7. He is forever and ever

48:11-13 There is a series of commands.

1. let Mount Zion be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. let the daughters of Judah rejoice – BDB 162, KB189, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. walk about Zion – BDB 685, KB 738, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. go around her – BDB 668, KB 722, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
5. count her towers – BDB 707, KB 765, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

6. consider her ramparts – BDB 1011, KB 1483, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

7. go through her palaces – BDB 819, KB 946, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

These may refer to a procession (cf. Ps. 26:6) as (1) Joshua surrounding Jericho seven times, cf. Jos. 6:3-15 or (2) in Nehemiah the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem, cf. Nehemiah 12.

▣ **“towers”** This word (BDB 153) refers to “watchtowers” (cf. 2 Kgs. 9:17; 17:9; 18:8) and to archers (cf. 2 Chr. 26:9,10,15; 32:5; Neh. 3:25-27; Isa. 2:15).

▣ **“ramparts”** This word (BDB 298) refers to either

1. a surrounding wall – Isa. 26:1; Lam. 2:8; Nah. 3:8
2. space between two outer walls – 2 Sam. 20:15; Lam. 2:8

▣ **“palaces” (or “citadel”)** This word (BDB 74) can refer to any large building within a walled city (cf. 2 Kgs. 15:25; 2 Chr. 36:19; Pro. 18:10; Isa. 32:14; Jer. 17:27; Lam. 2:5,7; Hos. 8:14; Amos 2:5; 6:8; Micah 5:5).

All three of these terms would collectively denote a powerful and fortified city of the ANE. But her real strength and durability was because YHWH dwelt there!

48:14

NASB “until death”

NKJV “*even to death*”

NRSV “forever”

JPSOA “evermore”

LXX “for ages”

REB “for evermore”

The difference between “until death” and “forever” is

1. where to divide the Hebrew consonants
2. the vowels the Masoretic scholars added much later to a Hebrew text

There is a third option for understanding this line of poetry. The same Hebrew term can refer to a musical tune “according to Alamoth” (cf. Psalm 46 title). If so, it would go with Psalm 49. This may be why NJB omits this line.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does this Psalm refer to a historical occasion or the eschaton?
2. Will Jerusalem be YHWH’s capital in the new age?
3. Why is verse 2 so controversial? Did Bible authors use terminology and imagery from pagan sources?
4. Do verses 4-8 describe an event like Psalm 2?
5. List the universal elements in this Psalm.
6. Do verses 12-13 describe a ritual procession? If so, are there any others like this in the OT?

PSALM 49

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Folly of Trusting in Riches <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Psalm of the sons of Korah	The Confidence of the Foolish	Meditation on the Transience of Life and Wealth	The Foolishness of Trusting in Riches	The Futility of Wealth
49:1-4	49:1-4	49:1-4	49:1-4	49:1-2 49:3-4
49:5-9	49:5-9	49:5-9	49:5-9	49:5-6 49:7-8 49:9
49:10-12	49:10-12	49:10-12	49:10-12	49:10 49:11 49:12-13
49:13-15	49:13-15	49:13-15	49:13-15	49:14a-c 49:14d-15
49:16-20	49:16-20	49:16-20	49:16-18 49:19-20	49:16-17 49:18-19 49:20

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Psalm 49 is a wisdom psalm (cf. Psalm 37). It is addressed to the covenant community, not to YHWH. It has much more in common with the book of Proverbs than it seems to have with the rest of the Psalter. Note the parallelism and terminology of verses 3-4, 10-12, 13.
- B. The subject matter is similar to Psalms 37 and 73 which is basically described as “the two ways”; a way that leads to life and a way that leads to death (cf. Psalm 1 and Deut. 30:1, 15, 19). The two ways are particularly seen in verses 3 and 5 compared to verse 6.
- C. The theme is the folly of trusting in human, earthly wealth. This is somewhat surprising because wealth and success were viewed as a sign of YHWH’s blessing for covenant obedience (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:1-4

¹Hear this, all peoples;
Give ear, all inhabitants of the world,
²Both low and high,
Rich and poor together.
³My mouth will speak wisdom,
And the meditation of my heart *will be* understanding.
⁴I will incline my ear to a proverb;
I will express my riddle on the harp.

49:1 Verse 1 has two parallel IMPERATIVES (“hear” [*Qal* IMPERATIVE] and “give ear” [*Hiphil* IMPERATIVE]). It is significant that the author of this Psalm saw that it had universal implications far beyond the boundaries of the Promised Land (cf. Ps. 45:16; 46:10; 47:1-2, 7-9; 48:2, 10; 49:1; 50:1, 4, 12, i.e., “all peoples,” “all inhabitants of the world”). It must be remembered that Wisdom Literature (see opening Article, p. xxv) was a literary genre well known and popular in the ANE.

49:2 “Both low and high” This is a very common metaphor in Hebrew used to express two extremes, and thereby include everything in between (note parallel “rich and poor”). This phrase itself is very unusual because it literally is “the sons of men” and “the sons of men,” but may be a play on two different words for “men.” The first one is the word *adam* (BDB 9), which usually means “mankind.” The second one is the word *ish* (BDB 35), the general term for a male person. It is also possible the two phrases are synonymous (NEB, cf. Ps. 62:9; Isa. 2:9; NET Bible).

49:3 “wisdom. . . understanding” Both of these terms are PLURAL (a PLURAL OF MAJESTY), which is a way of expressing a superlative idea. This is the highest wisdom and the deepest understanding. This inspired wisdom teacher speaks God’s truth.



NASB, NKJV,	
NRSV	“meditation”
TEV, REB	“thoughts”
NJB	“whisper”
JPSOA	“speech”
NAB	“utterance”

This is the only occurrence of this form of the root, הָגָה (BDB 212). The basic meaning of the root is “to groan,” “to sigh,” “to utter.”

In this context it refers to the internal thoughts of the psalmist. He may be

1. a sage/philosopher
2. a Levite/singer
3. a priest/theologian

49:4 “I will incline my ear to a proverb” This is a striking metaphor of listening intently to a proverb so as to understand its meaning. The term “proverb” (BDB 605) is an ancient wisdom term, which seems to have the concept of a riddle, difficult saying, or mysterious truth. However, the second line of verse 4 may possibly be a way of saying that he is going to state a riddle (BDB 295) and then give its meaning. The two halves of verse 4 seem to show the basic wisdom form. The author will state this truth in a way that the people of his culture/world can understand it.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:5-9

⁵Why should I fear in days of adversity,
 When the iniquity of my foes surrounds me,
⁶Even those who trust in their wealth
 And boast in the abundance of their riches?
⁷No man can by any means redeem *his* brother
 Or give to God a ransom for him—
⁸For the redemption of his soul is costly,
 And he should cease *trying* forever—
⁹That he should live on eternally,
 That he should not undergo decay.

49:5-9 “Why should I fear in days of adversity” This is the theme which will be developed in this Psalm.

The word “world” (BDB 317) is rare and can mean

1. life – Job 11:17; Ps. 39:5; 89:47
2. world – Ps. 17:14

Remember meaning is determined by contexts not dictionaries/lexicons.

Godly people have always wondered about the unfairness of life (cf. Job, Psalm 73; Habakkuk). Often the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. This seems to violate Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30. YHWH wanted to use the abundance and prosperity of His people to attract the nations to Himself. However, because of the Fall of Genesis 3, even covenant mankind could not keep the Law. The only prosperity came to violent, greedy, powerful people.

This is not the world that God created it to be. His people did not model His character (cf. Ezek. 36:22-23). Fallen mankind cannot save/redeem themselves or their families, or their neighbors!

49:5 “iniquities of my foes surround me” The KJV has the word “heels” in place of “foes.” The literal Hebrew term (BDB 784) seems to relate to Jacob as he held onto his brother’s heel as he was born and, therefore, was named the “trickster,” “supplanter,” or “usurper.” This is the concept of the word “foes” here.

49:6 “Even those who trust in their wealth” This VERB “trust” (BDB 105, KB 120) occurs mostly in Psalms and Isaiah (cf. Isa. 26:3-4; 30:15). In Psalm 37 we learned that we are to trust in God alone! This verse is the exact opposite, humans trusting in themselves or their material possessions (cf. Job 31:24; Ps. 62:10; Pro. 11:28; 23:4-5; Mark 10:23-31; 1 Tim. 6:17-19).

49:7 “No man can by any means redeem his brother” In Hebrew the term “brother” (BDB 26) appears first for emphasis. NEB, REB, RSV, NRSV change אָח (brother) to כִּלְיָ (surely, BDB 36). The UBS Text Project (p. 245) gives “brother” an “A” rating. The Hebrew states that a person cannot redeem (i.e., save, deliver) even himself/herself.

49:7,8 “redeem. . .ransom. . .redemption” There are two Hebrew VERBS:

1. “redeem” – BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root for emphasis
2. “ransom” (not BDB 145 I) – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT with BDB 497 I, lit. “a man cannot give to God the price of his life”

Both of them refer to the buying back of someone from slavery or from incarceration as a prisoner of war. See Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem at Ps. 19:14.

49:8-9 “For the redemption of his soul is costly,

And he should cease trying forever” This is a parenthetical thought which emphasizes that no matter how wealthy a man is, the price to pay to prolong life or secure an afterlife, is too high. This is where the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news (cf. Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21)!

Notice the parallelism.

1. he should cease *trying* forever (BDB 761) – BDB 292, KB 292, *Qal* PERFECT with *waw*
2. he should live on eternally (BDB 664) – BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* JUSSIVE
3. he should not see the pit (BDB 1001) – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT

It is difficult for Christians to interpret texts like this one because we read our NT understandings and definitions of words into these OT contexts. This is originally not related to Isaiah 53 or John 3:16. This is dealing with a long, healthy, prosperous life. Wealth cannot assure this! In a fallen world even covenant obedience could not assure this (i.e., Job, Isaac, Israel).

There are surely some hints of an afterlife in the OT (i.e., Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27; Ps. 16:10; Dan. 12:2), but for the most part the OT deals with this life!

49:8 “costly” In the context of the OT, the cost of ransom/redemption was

1. the death of an innocent animal as a substitute (cf. Leviticus 4) for the sinful soul of a human being or Leviticus 16 for a community of faith
2. in Psalm 51 there was no sacrifice for the intentional sin of David (cf. Lev. 4:2,22,27; 5:15-18; 22:14), so David offered “a broken and contrite heart” (Ps. 51:17)
3. the ultimate cost was paid by “the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (cf. John 1:29). This was predicted in Isa. 52:13-53:12 (i.e., the Suffering Servant). This concept of substitutionary atonement was documented by Jesus (cf. Mark 10:45), Paul (cf. Gal. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21), Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 2:21-24), and the author of Hebrews (cf. Heb. 7:26-27; 9:28).

49:9 “That he should live on eternally,

That he should not undergo decay” Here is the problem of wealth. It does not provide ultimate answers. It cannot make a person right with God and it cannot prolong life. Therefore, it is false hope; it is a glimmer that lasts for only a moment and then is gone. The only true light, the only true hope, and the only true life is found in God.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:10-12

¹⁰**For he sees *that even* wise men die;**

The stupid and the senseless alike perish

And leave their wealth to others.

¹¹**Their inner thought is *that* their houses are forever**

And their dwelling places to all generations;

They have called their lands after their own names.

¹²**But man in *his* pomp will not endure;**

He is like the beasts that perish.

49:10 “For he sees that even wise men die;

The stupid and the senseless alike perish” Although this metaphor is similar to the one found in Eccl. 2:15,16, it is used in a different sense here. Here, the death of all things, including people and animals, is related to their inability to purchase longer life through wealth. There seem to be three different people or groups involved in v. 10; the wise person, the stupid person, and the senseless person. Because animals are mentioned in vv.12 and 20, some would see them being referred to here in the “senseless” (BDB 129, animal-like, cf. Ps. 73:22).

▣ **“And leave their wealth to others”** Again, Eccl. 2:18-23 is very helpful. No matter how wealthy a person is, when he/she dies, he/she leaves it all to others.

49:11 “Their inner thought is *that* their houses are forever” The MT Hebrew text has the idea that the rich person believes he and his wealth will last forever. However, the LXX changes the thought to “their graves are their houses forever.” Whichever is correct, it still shows the ultimate folly of trusting in riches.

The UBS Text Project (p. 246) has

1. קרבם – their midst (NASB, “inner thought,” BDB 899)
2. קברם – their graves (BDB 868). It gives a “B” rating (some doubt) to option #2 (cf. NJB, REB, JPSOA, LXX, Syrian, Vulgate)

The term “houses” probably refers to elaborately decorated and expensive tombs. These, like the Pharaohs, thought physical monuments to themselves would assure their memory and, in a sense, their immortality.

▣ **“They have called their lands after their own names”** One way humans try to assure that they will be remembered is by naming geographical locations after themselves (or legal deeds in their names). This, too, is folly, for the names change from age to age.

49:12 “But man in *his* pomp will not endure” In an attempt to provide a synonymous parallelism in verses 12 and 20, the NEB and REB change –

“in honor” (NASB, “pomp”), ביקר, BDB 430, to

“cattle” (NEB, REB, “oven”), בקר, BDB 133

The UBS Text Project gives “in honor” a “B” rating (some doubt) in verse 12 and an “A” rating (certain) in verse 20. It is obvious that the pride and arrogance of the rich are being emphasized here (cf. Eccl. 3:19-23).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:13-15

¹³**This is the way of those who are foolish,
And of those after them who approve their words. Selah.**

¹⁴**As sheep they are appointed for Sheol;
Death shall be their shepherd;
And the upright shall rule over them in the morning,
And their form shall be for Sheol to consume
So that they have no habitation.**

¹⁵**But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol,
For He will receive me. Selah.**

49:13 “This is the way of those who are foolish” The foolish refers to either (1) the man who claims to know God but lives as if there is no God or (2) the overtly evil person. There is really no such thing as an atheist in the OT (cf. Isa. 53:1).

“Way” is an OT idiom for lifestyle. See notes at Ps. 1:1.

▣ **“And of those after them who approve their words”** This refers to those whom the arrogant wealthy influence with their philosophy of life. It may refer to their children, their students, other people who are seeking to be wealthy, or their friends. This is the end result of a false worldview (cf. Matt. 15:14; Luke 6:23).

▣ **“Selah”** This is a word about which there is much discussion but little unanimity. Some say it refers to

1. a pause
2. a rising crescendo
3. a musical interlude
4. forever, according to the rabbis

The very fact that there are so many interpretations means that no one really knows. See notes at Ps. 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII.

40:14 “As sheep they are appointed for Sheol” The term *Sheol* refers to “the realm of the dead” in the OT. It was seen as a place of consciousness but there was no joy, no fellowship, and a gloomy prospect of many dark, quiet days. See Special Topic at Ps. 1:6.

▣ **“Death shall be their shepherd”** Literally this is “death feeds them.” What a terrible parallel to the beauty of Ps. 23:1. Death lures those with the pleasures of this world but in the end, it is poison (cf. Proverbs 1-8).

▣ **“And the upright shall rule over them”** This truth is taught throughout the Bible (cf. Dan. 7:18; Mal. 4:3; 1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 2:26).

▣ **“in the morning”** This could refer to

1. the light of God’s truth

2. the light of life
3. the concept of the eschatological morning or the break of a new day

The NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 327, has a good list of things represented by “light.”

1. salvation – Ps. 27:1; Isa. 49:6
2. prosperity and peace – Isa. 45:7
3. YHWH’s covenant – Isa. 42:6
4. justice and righteousness – Isa. 51:4; 59:9
5. blessing – Ps. 89:15
6. God, Himself – Ps. 27:1; Isa. 60:1-3, 19-20
7. the Suffering Servant – Isa. 42:6; 49:6
8. Messiah – Isa. 9:2

It is possible to divide the Hebrew consonants differently to “they shall go straight to the grave” (NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 713). This fits the central truth of the strophe better (NRSV, REB).

▣ The VERB “consume” (BDB 115, KB 132, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is literally “wear out.” So the thought of the line is

1. *Sheol* will eat them (metaphor for *Sheol* as an animal with a voracious appetite or an allusion to the Canaanite god of death, *Mot*; see NASB Study Bible, p. 785, footnote and AB, p. 300).
2. The body will disintegrate to dust, as all bodies do after death (NRSV, TEV, JPSOA).

49:15 “But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol,

For He will receive me” What a tremendous truth! Notice the personal element – “me”! Here we have the beginning of the affirmation of an afterlife (or an intimate fellowship with God here and now throughout life and the confidence it will continue!), based, not on the works of man, but on the love of God. Here, personal faith, as well as a life of obedience and trust, are rewarded with eternality with our God (see notes at Ps. 23:6).

The term “receive” (BDB 542, KB 534) was used in Gen. 5:24 of Enoch. He was translated into YHWH’s presence!

For *Sheol* see notes at Ps. 6:5 and 9:13.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:16-20

- ¹⁶Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich,
When the glory of his house is increased;
¹⁷For when he dies he will carry nothing away;
His glory will not descend after him.
¹⁸Though while he lives he congratulates himself—
And though *men* praise you when you do well for yourself—
¹⁹He shall go to the generation of his fathers;
They will never see the light.
²⁰Man in *his* pomp, yet without understanding,
Is like the beasts that perish.**

49:17 “For when he dies he will carry nothing away” This is the truth that those who trust in wealth will leave it all at death (cf. 1 Tim. 6:7). Revelation 13:14 tells us that good deeds will follow after those who have lived for God. There is a book of life and a book of deeds (see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5). God will reward those who have loved and served Him. Judgment day is coming—for those who know our God it

will be a day of rewards, but for those who have trusted in themselves, it will be a day of eternal separation (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15).

▣ **“His glory”** This Hebrew word (BDB 458 II) can mean

1. abundance
2. honor
3. glory

▣ **“descend”** This VERB (BDB 432, KB 434, *Qal* IMPERFECT) denotes the belief that the dead are in the ground or in the earth. See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Ps. 1:6. This would be a way of expressing a descent into the realm of the dead. OT Semites buried their dead loved ones.

49:18 “Though while he lives he congratulates himself” This verse obviously is related to the bragging arrogance of those who trust in their own resources. But flattery is illusionary. God’s world is moral and each will give an account unto God (cf. Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Cor. 5:8; Rev. 20:11-15).

For “himself” (lit. *nephesh*) see notes at Ps. 3:2.

49:19 “He shall go to the generation of his fathers” This refers to the fact that in the OT burial was often done in family tombs, caves. This is an OT allusion for being buried with the family.

▣ **“They shall never see the light”** This probably refers to the same concept as v. 14. It could mean the light of life, the light of truth, but possibly it could mean the darkness of *Sheol*—the dwelling place of those who do not know our God (cf. Job 3:16; 33:28,30; Ps. 36:9).

49:20 This is exactly the same as verse 12 and is a fitting summary to the Psalm. It is pitiful but a true picture of a lost man as he stands wrapped in his own resources (cf. Matt. 7:13-14).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did a Jewish sage desire to speak to the entire world?
2. What reasons does the psalmist give for not fearing in the days of adversity?
3. Explain the term “redeem.”
4. How is this Psalm related to Ecclesiastes?
5. What is *Sheol*?
6. What is the theological implication of verse 15?

PSALM 50

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God the Judge of the Righteous and the Wicked <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of Asaph	God the Righteous Judge	A Liturgy of Divine Judgment	True Worship	Worship in Spirit and Truth
50:1-6	50:1-3	50:1-2 50:3-6	50:1-2 50:3-6	50:1-3a 50:3b-4
	50:4-6			50:5-6
50:7-15	50:7-11	50:7-11	50:7-11	50:7 50:8-9 50:10-11
	50:12-15	50:12-15	50:12-15	50:12-13 50:14-16a
50:16-21	50:16-21	50:16-18 50:19-21	50:16-18 50:19-21	50:16b-17 50:18-19
				50:20-21
50:22-23	50:22-23	50:22-23	50:22-23	50:22-23

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is another Psalm that contains a universal element (cf. 50:1,4,12; Ps. 45:16; 46:10; 47:2; 48:2,10; 49:1). This is another way of asserting YHWH as the Creator (Psalm 104), the only God (see Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7).
- B. Because His is the Creator, He is the only Judge. Humans will be judged by their relationship to God,
1. faith
 2. obedience
 3. worship
- not just their fulfillment of ritual or liturgical forms. True faith is of the heart before the hand!
- C. This Psalm is not about the judgment of all humans, but the judgment of the covenant people as heaven, earth, and all peoples watch. This judgment is for the purposes of
1. restoring some to heartfelt faith
 2. revealing the false faith of some
- D. This Psalm describes
1. those who are ritual-oriented followers (cf. vv. 7-15)
 2. those who are faithless followers (cf. vv. 16-21)
 3. brief summary in vv. 22-23
- E. There are many allusions to speaking. Notice
1. spoken, v. 1a
 - 2-3. summoned (i.e., to witness or testify), vv. 1b, 4
 4. not in silence, vv. 3, 21a
 - 5-6. direct speech of YHWH, vv. 5, 7
 7. declare, v. 6a
 8. I will speak, v. 7a
 9. I will testify, v. 7b
 10. reprove, vv. 8,21
 11. sacrifice of thanksgiving, vv. 14a, 23a
 12. YHWH says, v. 16a (much of the Psalm is YHWH speaking, vv. 5, 7-15, 16-21, 22-23)
 13. tell, v. 16b
 14. My words, v. 17b
 15. your mouth, v. 19a
 16. your tongue, v. 19b
 17. speak, v. 20a
 18. slander, v. 20b
- By their words you will know them for their words reveal their hearts (i.e., both groups, cf. Matt. 12:33-37; Luke 6:45).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:1-6

¹The Mighty One, God, the LORD, has spoken,

And summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

**²Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God has shone forth.**

**³May our God come and not keep silence;
Fire devours before Him,
And it is very tempestuous around Him.**

**⁴He summons the heavens above,
And the earth, to judge His people:**

**⁵“Gather My godly ones to Me,
Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.”**

**⁶And the heavens declare His righteousness,
For God Himself is judge. Selah.**

50:1-6 This strophe characterizes YHWH as the righteous Judge (cf. v. 6). The imagery of much of this Psalm is a court scene.

1. summoned the earth, vv. 1,4
2. the two eternal witnesses—heaven and earth (cf., Deut. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; 32:1), v. 4
3. God Himself is Judge, v. 5
4. I will testify against you, v. 7; notice the whole world, heaven and earth, are called to witness YHWH’s accusations against His covenant people

50:1 Notice the names/titles of Deity used (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1):

1. *El*, v. 1 – BDB 42, general name for God in the ANE from the root, “to be strong”
2. *Elohim*, vv. 1,2,3,6,7 (twice), 14,16,23 – BDB 43, God as creator, provider, and sustainer of all life
3. YHWH, v. 1 – BDB 217, the covenant-making God, God as Savior, Redeemer (v. 5)
4. *Elyon*, v. 14 – BDB 751 II, see full note at Ps. 46:5, “Most High” (cf. Deut. 32:8; Ps. 9:2; 21:7; etc.)
5. *Eloah*, v. 22 – BDB 42, SINGULAR of *Elohim* (mostly in Job)

It is possible that the first three are meant to form one title (cf. Jos. 22:22). The LXX, NJB, and AB (p. 304) suggest, “The God (*El*) of gods (*Elohim*) is YHWH.” There was some literary/theological reason to link these three names in a series, but it is lost to moderns.

▣ **“earth”** This is the Hebrew word *erets* (BDB 75, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:2). A parallel term, “world” (BDB 385, cf. Ps. 9:8; 18:15; 19:4; 24:1; 33:8; 50:12), is used mostly in Psalms and Isaiah.

▣ **“from the rising of the sun to its setting”** The phrase (cf. Ps. 113:3) is an idiom of universality, as is “from the east to the west.” All peoples are summoned to YHWH’s court. This concept is brought into the NT as

1. the sheep and goat judgment of Matt. 25:31-46
2. the judgment seat of Christ of 2 Cor. 5:8
3. the great white throne judgment of Rev. 20:11-15

This is alluded to in 1 Cor. 15:25-28. Humans will give an account to God of their stewardship of the gift of life!

50:2 “Zion” Here the city of God, Jerusalem, is characterized as “the perfection of beauty.” In Ps. 48:2 she is called, “beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth.” Both of these descriptive phrases are combined in Lam. 2:15. See notes at Ps. 2:6; 9:11; 20:1.

▣ **“God has shone forth”** This same VERB (BDB 422, KB 424, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) is used in Ps. 80:1 (*Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) and Ps. 94:1 (also *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE). In Psalm 49:14 I have listed how the light imagery is used to refer to different things. God is the light of the world (cf. Ps. 27:1; Isa. 60:1-3, 19-20) and so is His Son (cf. John 8:12; 12:35). Because of Them, so are Their faithful followers (cf. Matt. 5:14; 6:23; John 12:36).

50:3 This verse begins with two JUSSIVES (“may. . .”).

1. may our God come – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. may He not keep silence – BDB 361, KB 357, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

Judgment Day has arrived and the people of God are first to be charged (cf. Jer. 25:29; 1 Pet. 4:17).

▣ **“Fire devours before Him”** Fire is often associated with

1. the holiness/purity of God – Dan. 7:10
2. cleansing – Num. 31:23
3. judgment – Lev. 10:2; Num. 16:35

For a full listing of the imagery associated with “fire,” see the Special Topic at Ps. 11:6.

In this context it is associated with the physical description on earth that occurs when a holy God approaches (“comes,” v. 3a) His fallen creation (cf. Ps. 18:7-15; 97:1-6).

50:4 “heaven. . . earth” These are the two required witnesses (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15) for YHWH to take His people to court (cf. 50:4-5, 7, 16-21, 22-23). These represent the first two created things (i.e., the planet and its atmosphere).

50:5 “gather” This VERB (BDB 62, KB 74, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is contextually parallel to “summoned” (vv. 1, 4). Notice it is “the godly ones” (i.e., the covenant people) who are gathered for Judgment Day (i.e., “the judgment seat of Christ” in 2 Cor. 5:10 is also for believers not unbelievers).

▣ Notice how the ritual-oriented followers are described.

1. My godly ones, v. 5
2. those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice, v. 5
3. O My people, v. 7 (covenant terminology)
4. they are commanded to (vv. 14-15)
 - a. offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving (*Qal* IMPERATIVE)
 - b. pay your vows to the Most High (*Piel* IMPERATIVE)
 - c. call upon YHWH in the day of trouble (*Qal* IMPERATIVE)

▣ **“My godly ones”** This word/title (BDB 339) is used often in Psalms to refer to faithful followers (see notes at Ps. 4:3; 12:1; 16:10; 18:25; 30:4; 31:23; 32:6; 37:28; 43:1; 52:9, etc.). At Psalm 16:10 it refers by typology and NT quotes to the Messiah.

Here it denotes Israelites who focus too much on sacrificial rituals and not enough on personal faith and lifestyle godliness.

▣ **“to Me”** Even a judgment scene is a call to intimate fellowship. For the wicked it is a call to judgment and separation! To those ritual-oriented believers, it is a call to change.

50:5 “covenant” This crucial theological term (BDB 136) is not Hebraic. This concept best describes a sovereign God and a commanded, continuing, responsible choice on behalf of human creatures (see Special Topic at Ps. 25:10).

▣ **“by sacrifice”** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Sacrifices in Mesopotamia and Israel and Their Significance

(These notes are part of my OT Survey notes. Also note the chart in NIDOTTE, vol. 4, pp. 1020-1021)

- I. Ritual laws in Mesopotamia
 - A. Sacrifice was primarily a meal offered to a god. The altar was the table of the god where the meal was placed. Beside the altar was the incense brazier which was to attract the god's attention. There was no ritual implication in the blood. The sword bearer cut the throat of the animal. The food was shared between the gods, the priest-king, and the attendants. The offerer received nothing.
 - B. There was no expiatory sacrifice.
 - C. Sickness or pain was punishment from the gods. An animal was brought and destroyed; this acted as a substitute for the offerer.
 - D. Israel's ritual was different and distinct. It seems to have originated in a person giving back to God part of his labor for necessary food (cf. Gen. 4:1-4; 8:20-22).
- II. Ritual laws in Canaan (very similar to Israel's)
 - A. Sources
 - 1. biblical accounts
 - 2. Phoenician literature
 - 3. Ras Shamra Tablets from Ugarit concerning Canaanite deities and mythology from about 1400 B.C.
 - B. Israel's and Canaan's sacrifices are very much alike. However, there is no emphasis placed on the blood of the victim in Canaan sacrifices.
- III. Ritual Laws in Egypt
 - A. Sacrifices were offered but not emphasized.
 - B. The sacrifice was not important but the attitude of the sacrificer was.
 - C. Sacrifices were made to stop the wrath of the gods.
 - D. The offerer hoped for deliverance or forgiveness.
- IV. Israel's Sacrificial System and Israel's sacrifices were closer to Canaan's, although not necessarily related to them at all.
 - A. Descriptive Phrases
 - 1. Sacrifice was a spontaneous expression of mankind's need for God.
 - 2. The OT laws which regulate sacrifice cannot be said to initiate sacrifice (cf. Gen. 7:8; 8:20).
 - 3. Sacrifice was an offering (animal or vegetable).
 - 4. Must be an offering that was wholly or partially destroyed upon an altar in homage to God.
 - 5. The altar was the place of sacrifice and symbolized the divine presence.
 - 6. Sacrifice was an act of external worship (a prayer which was acted out).

7. The definition of sacrifice is “acted prayer” or “ritualized prayers.” The significance of ritual and our cultural bias against it is revealed in Gordon J. Wenham (Tyndale, Numbers, p. 25-39). Leviticus and Numbers both contain large amounts of this type of material, which shows its importance to Moses and Israel.

B. Sacrifice Involved

1. Gifts to God

- a. involve acknowledgment that all of the earth is the Lord’s
- b. all that a person has, he owes to God
- c. therefore, it is right that people bring tribute to God
- d. it was a special kind of tribute or gift. It was something that the man needed to sustain his own existence. It was more than just giving something, it was something he needed. It was giving a part of himself to God.
- e. by destroying the gift it cannot be reclaimed
- f. a burnt offering becomes invisible and goes up to God’s realm
- g. earlier altars were erected in places where God appeared. The altar came to be looked upon as a holy place, therefore, the offering was brought there.

2. Expressing consecration of one’s entire life to God

- a. the burnt offering was one of three voluntary sacrifices
- b. the entire animal was burnt to express to God our deep felt homage
- c. this was a very expressive gift to God

3. Fellowship with God

- a. communion aspect of sacrifice
- b. an example would be the peace offering which symbolized God and man in fellowship
- c. sacrifice was made to obtain or regain this fellowship

4. Expiation of sin

- a. when man sinned he had to ask God to restore the relationship (covenant) which man had broken
- b. there was no communal meal with the sin offering because of the broken relationship
- c. the significance of blood
 - (1) placed on altar for man
 - (2) placed on veil for priest
 - (3) placed on mercy seat for High Priest and the nation (Leviticus 16)
- d. there were two types of sin offerings. The second is called the guilt offering or trespass offering. In it the offender was to restore to his fellow Israelite that which was taken or damaged along with the animal sacrifice.
- e. there was no sacrifice for premeditated or intentional sin, Lev. 4:2,22,27; 5:15-18; 22:14

V. Procedures from Leviticus for the Different Sacrifices

A. Leviticus 1

1. Introductory Formula, “The Lord spoke to Moses,” 1:1-2; 4:1; 5:14; 6:1,19; 7:22, 28
 - a. from the herd or flock
 - b. “when,” v. 2, shows that this was not mandatory but voluntary

2. Burnt Offering, vv. 3-17 (6:8-13)

a. Altar

- (1) The brazen altar, which was also called altar of burnt offering, altar by door of Tabernacle, or altar of shittim wood, covered with bronze (cf. Exodus 27)
- (2) this distinguished it from the incense altar (golden altar) in the Holy Place (cf. Exodus 30)
- (3) coals from brazen altar were taken to incense altar
- (4) brazen altar was right in the middle of the entrance of the Tabernacle
- (5) altar had horns which were its most sacred part. The blood was applied to the horns (cf. Exod. 30:10).
- (6) the horns were possibly for:
 - (a) symbol of hands to hold offering up
 - (b) symbol of strength or prevailing power (Deut. 33:17; 2 Sam. 22:3.)
 - (c) later, anyone who grabbed the horns of the altar was safe until his case was decided by the court (1 Kgs. 1:50-51; 2:28)

b. The Offering

- (1) bullock without blemish which was mentioned first because of its importance and cost, Lev. 1:3
- (2) male goat or sheep, 1:10
- (3) turtle doves or young pigeons, 1:14 (provision for the poor)

c. Place of Burnt Offering was at the door of the Tent of Meeting

d. Laying on of the Hands, this was only for the bulls, not for goats, sheep or birds, 1:4

- (1) the offerer did this himself (not the priest)
- (2) many feel it was a symbolic action of the transferring of guilt
- (3) some believe it meant that
 - (a) this animal comes from this particular individual
 - (b) the sacrifice was to be presented in the offerer's name
 - (c) the fruit of this sacrifice belongs to the one who placed his hands on the animal

e. Slaughtering

- (1) bull – “before the Lord,” by the man making the sacrifice. The offerer had to kill, skin, and cut up the animal. The priest's role (except in case of public sacrifices) began when the man brought the animal to the altar.
- (2) sheep or goat, 1:11 – “on north side of altar before the Lord.” This designated a specific place for these lesser animals.
- (3) bird – “The priest killed and offered this sacrifice. The offerer had to remove the bird's crop.

f. Handling of the Blood

- (1) animals
 - (a) The priest threw blood against the altar, and sprinkled it round about the altar.

- (b) The life of the animal was in the blood (cf. Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11). Life already belonged to God, therefore, the blood represented no part of the gift of the man.
 - (c) The bird's blood was drained on the side of the altar and not consumed in fire.
- g. Handling of the Flesh
 - (1) bull, Lev. 1:6
 - (a) The offerer skinned the offering. The priest could keep the skin (cf. Lev. 7:8)
 - (b) The offerer cut it into pieces
 - (c) The priest placed the offering on the altar in an arrangement as it was when alive
 - (d) The legs and entrails were washed with water from the laver
 - (e) The priest burned the whole animal on altar
- 3. Occasion of Burnt Offerings
 - a. Feast of Tabernacles, Booths
 - b. Day of Atonement
 - c. Feast of Weeks, First Fruits, or Pentecost
 - d. Feast of Trumpets
 - e. Wave Sheaf (Leviticus 23)
 - f. Feast of Unleavened Bread, Passover
 - g. Beginning of months, New Moon
 - h. Sabbath
- 4. Significance of Burnt Offering
 - a. A gift to God
 - b. Seen as the most valuable kind of sacrifice
 - c. It seems to deal with the concept of sin in general or thanksgiving
 - d. Most perfect representation of sacrificial idea
 - e. Symbolic offering of one's life
 - f. Represents complete consecration of the life of an individual to the service of God
 - g. Graded value of offering
 - (1) bull
 - (2) sheep – goat
 - (3) birds
 - h. This shows that anyone conscious of spiritual need could approach God. God made provision for all men.
- 5. Special Instructions for Priest, Lev. 6:8-12
 - a. Burnt offering remained all night on hearth of the altar
 - b. Fire was to be kept burning continually under a burnt offering
 - c. Instructions involving the Priest's dress
 - d. Instructions involving the removal of the ashes

B. Leviticus 2:1-16 (6:14-23)

1. Introduction

- a. This chapter deals with the grain offering
- b. Grain offering was from the root meaning “gift.” It became a technical term for non-animal, or vegetable gifts.
- c. After the Exile the grain offering appears as a supplement to the burnt offering and peace offering and the rabbis say it could be offered alone by the very poor.
- d. Salt covenant was also mentioned in Num. 18:19 and 2 Chr. 13:5. Salt was the opposite of leaven. It was used as a symbol of the covenant of God because it was non-corruptible and lasting.

2. The Grain Offering involved one’s labor being given to God.

- a. It was a gift to God from the daily food of the people.
- b. It was generally a supplement (especially in post-exile days) to the burnt or peace offering.
- c. Sacrifice was God’s provision for the priest. Only a small part was burned as a memorial of the whole.
- d. The word “memorial” describes the offered portion, or that part which brings the whole before the Lord.
- e. New Testament concept of the Lord’s Supper as “memorial” expresses this Old Testament concept.
- f. The distinction between the terms “holy” and “most holy” are:
 - (1) “holy” – priest and family could eat it at any clean place
 - (2) “most holy” – could only be eaten by the priests and in court of Tent of Meeting

3. Types

- a. unbaked flour (for the rich), Lev. 2:1-3
- b. baked loaves or cake, Lev. 2:4-11
- c. green ears of corn or wheat (for the poor), Lev. 2:12-16
 - (1) unbaked flour was the highest offering. It was the very best of wheat flour.
 - (2) baked cakes
 - (a) oil was an ingredient
 - (b) prepared in oven, 2:4.
 - (c) on a baking iron, 2:5.
 - (d) in an earthen frying pan, 2:7.
 - (3) green ears of corn or wheat
 - (a) must be parched
 - (b) broken into coarse grits
 - (c) arranged like a meal set before guests

4. Ingredients

- a. fine flour corresponded to an animal without blemish
- b. oil was a symbol of prosperity and, therefore, a symbol of God’s presence
 - (1) used for food, sacrificing, medicine, and anointing
 - (2) possibly use of oil was to replace offering of oil

- c. frankincense was from India or Arabia
 - (1) seen as a very pure thing with a wonderful fragrance
 - (2) symbolized prayer and praise
- d. salt
 - (1) life-giving as well as preserving qualities
 - (2) possibly more for table fellowship than for preserving
- e. elements excluded
 - (1) leaven excluded, 2:11
 - (a) possibly because of fermentation
 - (b) leaven associated with corruption
 - (c) could be offered with first fruits and to priest
 - (2) honey excluded
 - (a) syrup was from fruit not honeybee
 - (b) possibly because of its use in Canaanite ritual
- 5. Ritual of Offering
 - a. it was brought to the priest, who handled the whole ceremony (2:2, 9, 16)
 - b. part of the offering was to be eaten by priest in the sanctuary. It was most holy.
- 6. Significance
 - a. present from inferior to superior
 - b. burning of a portion of it represented the consecration of a portion of one's labor to God
 - c. apparent meaning
 - (1) burnt offering – consecration of one's life
 - (2) meal offering – dedication of one's daily labor
- 7. Special Instructions for Grain Offering, Lev. 6:14-23
 - a. offering in front of altar
 - b. labor offered the gift to God, but in reality it supported the priesthood
- C. Leviticus 3:1-17 (7:13-34), Peace Offering
 - 1. Introduction
 - a. why
 - (1) communion offering
 - (2) covenant sacrifice
 - (3) corporate offering
 - (4) concluding sacrifice
 - b. it expressed thankfulness to God because of fellowship with God, family, and friends
 - c. it was usually the final act in a series of sacrifices in which reconciliation had been established
 - d. the burnt offering expressed the costliness of obedience, while the peace offering expressed the joy and happiness of fellowship with God
 - e. male or female but without blemish

- f. varieties of offering
 - (1) from herd; male or female
 - (2) the distinction that was made between the sheep and the goat was because of the fat of the tail of the sheep
 - (a) lamb of flock – male or female
 - (b) goat of flock – male or female
- 2. Ritual
 - a. presentation of offering
 - (1) laid hands on offering
 - (2) killed it at door of the Tent of meeting
 - (3) identification of sacrifice was the same as the burnt offering
 - (4) sprinkling of blood around altar
 - (5) burning of choice parts on altar to God
 - (a) fat (sheep-fatty tail) symbolized prosperity
 - (b) kidneys, lobe of liver symbolized the seat of the will and emotions
 - (c) fatty portions placed on offerer's burnt offering or on morning lamb offering
 - b. thanksgiving offering included (Lev. 7:11-14)
 - (1) unleavened cake mixed with oil
 - (2) unleavened wafers spread with oil
 - (3) fine flour mixed with oil
- 3. Priest's Portion, Lev. 7:28-34
 - a. breast belonged to priest as a wave offering
 - b. waving involves the placing of the offering upon the offerer's hands and the priest's hands. It showed the offering offered by the offerer to God, and then its reception back by the priest.
 - c. right thigh belonged to officiating priest
 - d. heave offering was lifted to God and received back by the priest
- 4. Offerer's Portion, Lev. 7:15-18
 - a. A Thanksgiving Offering shall be eaten on day of giving, 7:15
 - b. A Votive (vow) or Freewill Offering shall be eaten on day of offering or on the next day, 7:16
 - c. This portion was all that was not given to God and by God to the priest
 - d. God symbolically eats with the offerer and his family and friends in this offering
 - e. This offering stresses that fellowship relationships have been restored
- D. Leviticus 4:1-5:13 (6:24-30) SIN OFFERING
 - 1. Introduction
 - a. This is the first offering in which atonement was the dominant element.
 - b. This sacrifice re-establishes the covenant between man and God. It restores fellowship.
 - c. This offering involves:
 - (1) Sins of ignorance
 - (2) Sins of inadvertence

- (3) Sins of passion
- (4) Sins of omission
- (5) It did not atone for sins committed intentionally in haughty rebellion against God. There was no sacrifice for intentional, high handed, premeditated sin (cf. Num. 15:27-31).

2. Meaning

- a. This offering expiated the guilt and punishment for sins.
- b. This involved grace on God's part and faith on man's part.
- c. No sacrifice achieves anything by mere ritual offering. It was the offerer's faith behind the act.
- d. Yet, sacrifice was more than the mere expression of the offerer. It did something for him. It re-established the relationship with God.
- e. Ritual was a God-given means of restitution, not a substitute for personal faith.
- f. God hates any religious action without accompanying faith, Isa. 1:10-20; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8.

3. Ritual

- a. For the High Priest, Lev. 3-12
 - (1) High priest – anointed priest
 - (a) sin, in leading people wrongly
 - (b) sin, in a personal nature
 - (c) the high priest, being the spiritual representative of the community. If he sins, all sinned in him. This was the Jewish understanding of corporality (cf. Joshua 7; Romans 5:12ff).
 - (2) Procedures
 - (a) the High Priest brought a young bullock without blemish to altar
 - (b) he laid hands on its head
 - (c) the High Priest slaughtered animal
 - (d) the High Priest sprinkled the blood before the veil seven times
 - i. this cleansed the Tabernacle
 - ii. symbolically opened the way to God
 - iii. blood placed on horns of incense altar
 - iv. blood remaining poured out at base of altar of burnt offering
 - (e) he placed all the fat on the altar to be burned
 - (f) all the rest of the animal will be taken outside the camp to a clean place, 4:12, where the ashes are poured out from altar; there the remainder of the animal is burned
- b. For the Nation, Lev. 4:13-21
 - (1) they sinned when commands of the law were not met, 4:13-21
 - (2) procedures
 - (a) the Elders brought a young bullock without blemish to altar
 - (b) the Elders laid hands on head

- (c) the Elders slaughtered the animal
 - (d) the High Priest sprinkled the blood before veil seven times
 - i. this cleansed Tabernacle
 - ii. symbolically opened the way to God
 - iii. blood placed on horns of incense altar
 - iv. rest poured out at base of altar of sacrifice
 - (e) all of it offered on the altar
 - (f) all the rest of the animal was taken outside the camp to a clean place, v. 12, where the ashes were poured out from the altar; there the remainder of the animal was burned
- c. For leader, Lev. 4:22-26
 - (1) leader (ruler) 4:22-26
 - (a) leader of tribe
 - (b) responsible person in community
 - (c) elder
 - (2) procedures
 - (a) the leader brought a male goat (old, shaggy goat) to altar
 - (b) the leader laid hands on its head
 - (c) the leader slaughtered the animal
 - (d) a High Priest placed blood on horns of altar of burnt offering – the rest of blood poured out at base of altar of sacrifice
 - (e) all fat is burned on the altar
 - (f) priests ate the rest of the flesh
- d. For individual, Lev. 4:27-35
 - (1) for individual – when he learned he had sinned he was to make this offering
 - (2) procedures
 - (a) the individual brought a female goat or female lamb
 - (b) the individual laid hands on its head
 - (c) the individual slaughtered the animal
 - (d) a priest placed blood on horns of altar of sacrifice – rest poured out at base of altar
 - (e) all fat placed on altar and burned
 - (f) priests ate the rest of the flesh
- e. Special cases involving the sin offering, Lev. 5:1-13 (these seem to involve intentional sin against a covenant partner)
 - (1) if a witness doesn't come forward and testify (failure to give information), 5:1
 - (2) touching unclean animal, 5:2
 - (3) touching unclean human, 5:3
 - (4) speaking thoughtlessly with an oath, 5:4
 - (5) offering for the above sins:
 - (a) female goat or sheep
 - (b) two turtledoves or two pigeons

- (c) 1/10 ephah of fine flour
- f. Sin offering ritual, Lev. 6:24-30
 - (1) priest could eat what was left
 - (2) if blood got on clothes, clothes must be washed
 - (3) if blood got on earthen vessel, vessel was broken
 - (4) if blood got on brass vessel, vessel was washed
 - (5) if burnt offering's blood was brought into Holy Place, then the flesh must be burnt and not eaten by priest
- g. Significance of the sin offering
 - (1) there is no offering for premeditated sin – only for inadvertent sin or sins of ignorance, Lev. 4:15,18.
 - (2) what does forgiveness involve:
 - (a) man's part is faith
 - (b) God's part is mercy
- E. Leviticus 5:14-19 GUILT OR TRESPASS OFFERING
 - 1. Introduction
 - a. While the Sin Offering dealt with sin committed, the Guilt Offering had to do with the damage that was done to a covenant partner and what restitution was possible.
 - b. The sin and trespass offerings were very similar.
 - c. The rights of the individual were expressed in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5).
 - (1) home
 - (2) accumulation of good
 - (3) life
 - d. This offering emphasizes the harm done to our brother in sinning and the restitution of the cost of that which was damaged plus 1/5 more.
 - 2. Sins Requiring an Offering
 - a. against God or that which belongs to Him
 - (1) first fruits
 - (2) firstborn, Lev. 5:14-16
 - (3) tithe
 - (4) offering given incorrectly
 - (5) gifts of inferior value
 - b. "If a person sins and does any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, though he was unaware, still he is guilty, and shall bear his punishment."
- F. Ancient sacrifices were offered to
 - 1. appease an angry deity
 - 2. feed a deity
 - 3. communicate with a deity
 - 4. praise a deity
 - 5. foster a sense of forgiveness or reconciliation

50:6 This is an idiomatic affirmation of YHWH as Creator and thereby His right to pass judgment.

▣ **“the heavens declare His righteousness”** This affirms “natural revelation” (cf. Ps. 8:3; 19:1-6; 97:6; also note John 12:7-10).

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Ps. 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:7-15

⁷**“Hear, O My people, and I will speak;
O Israel, I will testify against you;
I am God, your God.
⁸I do not reprove you for your sacrifices,
And your burnt offerings are continually before Me.
⁹I shall take no young bull out of your house
Nor male goats out of your folds.
¹⁰For every beast of the forest is Mine,
The cattle on a thousand hills.
¹¹I know every bird of the mountains,
And everything that moves in the field is Mine.
¹²If I were hungry I would not tell you,
For the world is Mine, and all it contains.
¹³Shall I eat the flesh of bulls
Or drink the blood of male goats?
¹⁴Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving
And pay your vows to the Most High;
¹⁵Call upon Me in the day of trouble;
I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.”**

50:7-15 This strophe seems to have three foci.

1. a word to His ritual-oriented followers
2. an affirmation of His Lordship over His creation, whereby He does not need human sacrifices, especially if by giving them humans feel YHWH is obliged to act on their behalf!
3. the need for heart faith (cf. Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4), not just the ritual/liturgy of the sacrificial system (cf. Ps. 51:16-17; Isa. 1:10-15; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8)

50:7 Covenant summons followers to hear YHWH speak.

1. Hear – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, the Judge is speaking
2. I will speak – BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
3. I will testify against you – BDB 729, KB 795, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE

▣ This verse has several phrases that are known as covenant terminology.

1. My people (cf. Exod. 19:5-6)
2. O Israel (cf. Deut. 6:4-5)
3. I am God, your God (cf. Exod. 20:2; often in Leviticus)

The issue being addressed is lifestyle covenant obedience, not just sacrifices. Sacrifice was a ritual means of a holy God forgiving and staying in fellowship with sinful mankind. The heart was as crucial (cf. Deut. 10:16) as the act itself!

50:10-12 YHWH is affirming His lordship over all creation. Notice the repeated use of “every,” “everything” (cf. Deut. 10:14; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 103:19-22).

50:13 Sacrifices were never viewed in the OT as food for God.

1. In Mesopotamian theology the gods ate the offerings of humans.
2. In Canaanite theology, *Anath* did eat flesh and drink blood.

One wonders how much of the vocabulary (not theology) of Israel was affected first by Canaanite mythology and later Judaism by Zoroastrian theology.

50:11 “that moves in the field” This CONSTRUCT (BDB 260 I and BDB 961) is found only here and 80:14. It is parallel to “birds” and, therefore, must be some type of creature (cf. Gen. 1:24-25).

1. small animals (i.e., mice, rats, foxes, etc.)
2. insects

Whatever they are, they are one example of YHWH’s ownership of all creatures on this planet (cf. v. 10a).

50:14-15 The last two verses of this strophe are characterization of what things ritual-oriented followers should do, which are not directly related to the sacrifices of Leviticus 1-7.

1. offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving – BDB 256, KB 261, *Qal* IMPERATIVE; this may have been the expected fulfillment of a vow, cf. Ps. 66:13-15
2. pay your vows to the Most High – BDB 1022, KB 1532, *Piel* IMPERATIVE (Numbers 30; Deut. 23:21; Ps. 22:25; 56:12; 61:8; 65:1; 71:11)
3. call upon Me (i.e., prayer) in the day of trouble – BDB 894, KB1128, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

If they do these things, then YHWH will “rescue” (i.e., “deliver,” BDB 322, KB 321, *Piel* IMPERFECT) each one. In turn each one will “honor” God (BDB 457, KB 455, *Piel* IMPERFECT).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:16-21

¹⁶But to the wicked God says,

“What right have you to tell of My statutes
And to take My covenant in your mouth?

¹⁷For you hate discipline,

And you cast My words behind you.

¹⁸When you see a thief, you are pleased with him,

And you associate with adulterers.

¹⁹You let your mouth loose in evil

And your tongue frames deceit.

²⁰You sit and speak against your brother;

You slander your own mother’s son.

²¹These things you have done and I kept silence;

You thought that I was just like you;

I will reprove you and state *the case* in order before your eyes.”

50:16-21 This strophe is directed to the faithless follower, here called “the wicked” (BDB 957). These were men/women/youth of the covenant people who, by their words, deeds, and omissions, showed their rebellious, self-centered orientation (i.e., violated three of the Ten Commandments).

1. they speak of God and His covenant but ignore it, v. 16 (i.e., possibly the repeating of covenant verses or ritual but without faith and lifestyle)
2. they hate its requirements and ignore them (i.e., “cast My words behind you”; they were practical atheists), v. 17; cf. Neh. 9:26
3. not only are they not offended by evil deeds, they associate with those who do them, v. 18 (“by their fruits. . .,” Matt. 7:16-20; 1 Cor. 15:33)
4. their words reveal their hearts, vv. 19-20 (cf. Matt. 12:33-37)
5. they thought YHWH’s patience with them was an affirmation (cf. Eccl. 8:11; Isa. 57:11)

But YHWH will act.

1. I will reprove you – BDB 406, KB 410, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. I will state *the case* in order before your eyes – BDB 789, KB 884, *Qal* COHORTATIVE, i.e., prepare a legal case, cf. Job 13:18; 23:4; 32:14; 33:5

50:18

NASB “you are pleased with him”

NKJV “you consented with him”

NRSV, TEV,

NJB “make friends with”

LXX “you would join him”

JPSOA “you fall in with him”

REB “you choose him as a friend”

The MT has “pleased” (BDB 953, KB 1280, *Qal* IMPERFECT with *waw*). The LXX, Syrian, and Vulgate have, “run with” or “associate with,” which seems to fit the parallelism better. The UBS Text Project gives the MT wording a “B” rating (some doubt).

50:19

NASB, NRSV “everything that moves in the field”

NKJV “the wild beasts of the field”

TEV “all living things in the field”

NJB “whatever moves in the fields”

JPSOA “creatures of the field”

REB “the teeming life of the plains”

The MT has “moving things of the field” (BDB 265 I CONSTRUCT BDB 961). The first word is used only here and in Ps.80:13. It would seem to refer to the “teeming things” of Gen. 1:24-26.

50:21 “You thought that I was just like you” This phrase is intensified by the VERB “to be” in both an INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT and an IMPERFECT VERB.

Peripheral believers always assume they are secure and their beliefs are the same as God’s. Revelation is the final arbiter! Fallen humans, even covenant humans, do not understand God or His word, but they think they do! For me as a Bible teacher, it is crucial that I maintain a teachable, repentant, humble spirit. My theology is not God’s theology. He is not part of my tradition. I must remember all humans are

1. historically conditioned
2. sinful, damaged humans
3. susceptible to dogmatism and arrogance

The more you know, the more you know you do not know!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:22-23

²²“**Now consider this, you who forget God,
Or I will tear *you* in pieces, and there will be none to deliver.**
²³**He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me;
And to him who orders *his* way *aright*
I shall show the salvation of God.”**

50:22-23 This is a summary statement that has a message for both the ritual-oriented followers (by implication) and the faithless followers (direct address). Both are to “consider” (BDB 106, KB 122, *Qal* IMPERATIVE).

1. to the wicked
 - a. those who forget God, v. 22a
 - b. judgment will come and no one can save, v. 22b
2. to the faithful in contrast
 - a. who offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, v. 23a (cf. v. 14a)
 - b. who honor Me, v. 23a (cf. v. 15b)
 - c. who orders *his* way *aright*

YHWH will destroy the wicked (v. 22b), but deliver the faithful (v. 23c).

50:22b “Lest I tear *you* in pieces” This is imagery of YHWH as a lion (cf. Ps. 7:2; 17:12; Hos. 5:14; see Special Topic: Lions in the OT at Ps. 7:2). There is a painful consequence to rebellion and continuing unbelief! Justice is not without consequence!

▣ **“there will be none to deliver”** If God is against us, who can help us?! He and He alone can deliver. This same concept is expressed positively in Rom. 8:31-39.

50:23b This is an ambiguous line of poetry. Literally it is “set a way.” The VERB (BDB 962, KB 1321) has a wide semantical field. Most English translations take it as referring to a godly, covenant, obedient lifestyle. It is surely possible that it refers to an appropriate sacrifice!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How would you entitle this Psalm?
2. What two types of covenant people are discussed? (vv. 7-15, 16-21)
3. Who is on trial?
4. Is sacrifice wrong?
5. What does it mean, “God kept silent?” Why does God keep silent? (v. 21)

PSALM 51

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Contrite Sinner's Prayer for Pardon <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone to Bathsheba.	A Prayer of Repentance	A Prayer for Healing and Moral Renewal	A Prayer for Forgiveness	A Prayer of Contrition
51:1-4	51:1-2 51:3-4	51:1-2 51:3-5	51:1-2 51:3-5	51:1-2 51:3-4b 51:4c-5
51:5-9	51:5-6 51:7-9	51:6-9	51:6-9	51:6-7 51:8-9
51:10-13	51:10-11 51:12-13	51:10-12 51:13-14	51:10-13	51:10-11 51:12-13
51:14-17	51:14-17	51:15-17	51:14-15 51:16-17	51:14-15 51:16-17
51:18-19	51:18-19	51:18-19	51:18-19	51:18-19

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is one of the penitential Psalms, cf. Psalm 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; and 143. Psalm 51 may be related to Psalm 32, i.e., possibly David's sin; Psalm 32 may have been written later in David's life.
- B. Although the introduction to Psalm 51 in the MT is a later addition, it may accurately reflect the subject matter of this Psalm. For a fuller understanding of the background read 2 Samuel 11 and 12.
- C. David, as King of Israel, was God's official representative among His people. He betrayed this sacred trust. He does not call God "YHWH" in this Psalm (but this is characteristic of Book II of the Psalms). However, he calls upon God's unchanging character of love and mercy (cf. Mal. 3:6) as he throws himself, without excuse, in God's hands.
There was no OT sacrifice for intentional, premeditated sin (cf. Lev. 4:2, 22, 27; 5:15-18; 22:14).
1. lusted after another's wife
 2. forced her to commit adultery
 3. lied to her husband who was a royal soldier
 4. had others (i.e., Israeli military duplicity) murder him
 5. tried to cover the entire thing up instead of repenting
- D. Notice how many different expressions are used to denote "forgiveness."
1. blot out – vv. 1, 9
 2. wash – vv. 2, 9
 3. cleanse – v. 2
 4. purify – v. 7
 5. hide Your face – v. 9
 6. deliver – v. 14

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:1-4

- ¹Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;
According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.
- ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity
And cleanse me from my sin.
- ³For I know my transgressions,
And my sin is ever before me.
- ⁴Against You, You only, I have sinned
And done what is evil in Your sight,
So that You are justified when You speak
And blameless when You judge.

51:1-2 Notice the literary flow of this strophe, which deals with a believer's confession of known sin. There are four (possibly five, *Qere*) IMPERATIVES OF REQUEST.

1. be gracious to me – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE; this is a recurrent prayer request (cf. Ps. 4:1; 6:2; 9:13; 25:16; 26:11; 27:7; 30:10; 31:9; 41:4,10; 56:1; 57:1 [twice] etc.) to a gracious God (BDB 337, cf. Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 116:5; 145:8; see Special Topic at Ps. 9:10b)
 - a. according to Your lovingkindness (BDB 338, see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7)
 - b. according to the greatness of Your compassion (i.e., CONSTRUCT BDB 913 and BDB 933, cf. Ps. 25:6; 69:16; 119:156; 145:9)
2. blot out my transgressions – BDB 562, KB 567, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. v. 9, usually this word is used of destroying sinners (cf. Ps. 9:5; 69:28; 109:13) from life and the book of life (cf. Exod. 32:32-33; see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5)

This concept of “experienced” forgiveness and restoration to divine fellowship is also found in the NT, esp. Heb. 9:14; 1 John 1:7,9.

The same three NOUNS for “sin” also are found in Exod. 34:7. Interestingly the VERB “blot out” is found in Exod. 32:32-33. Maybe the psalmist had the book of Exodus in mind.

The VERB is also found in Isa. 43:25; 44:22. It asserts the great truth that when God forgives, God forgets—note Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19. Several different metaphors are used but all suggest “out of sight, out of mind.”

In the ANE ink was acidic. When one wrote on a papyrus page the ink bit into the plant material and could not be erased. To erase something was a miracle of God, just like washing a dyed cloth white (cf. Isa. 1:18) was also impossible (i.e., no bleach available). Forgiveness is a miracle of God!

3. wash me – BDB 460, KB 459, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, only here in the Psalms and *Piel* IMPERFECT in Ps. 51:7; used predominately in Leviticus for ritual purification
4. “thoroughly” (MT has a *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, but the Masoretic Jewish scholars suggested a changes to another IMPERATIVE) – BDB 915, KB 1176, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
5. cleanse me – BDB 372, KB 369, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, only here in the Psalms, and *Qal* IMPERFECT in 51:7; used predominately in Leviticus for something pronounced clean.

51:1 “transgressions” There are several terms for human rebellion against God found in this strophe.

1. transgression, 51:1,3 – BDB 833, cf. Isa. 59:12-13; Amos 5:12; Micah 1:5 (twice),13; its basic meaning is to revolt or rebel against God
2. iniquity, vv. 2,5,9 – BDB 730, cf. Ps. 32:5 (thrice), used often in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel
3. sin, vv. 2,9,13 – BDB 308, cf. Ps. 32:5 (twice), its basic meaning is to “miss”; the basic root is often used of a “sin offering”
4. evil, v. 4 – BDB 948 II, very common word, cf. Ps. 5:4; 7:4,9; 10:6,15; 23:4; 34:13,14,16; 36:4; 37:27; 41:5; 49:5; 52:3; 54:5, etc.

One can tell how important a concept is to a culture/language by how many terms are used to communicate or clarify the concept. Hebrew has many words for sin/rebellion against God.

▣ **“sin”** This FEMININE NOUN (BDB 308) is found in 51: 2,3,9,13. The MASCULINE NOUN (BDB 307) is in 51:5,9. The VERB (BDB 306, KB 305) is in 51:4,7.

51:3-4 These verses reveal the inner consequences of sin and its terrible disruption of fellowship with God.

1. “I know my transgressions” – They are not sins of ignorance but of open rebellion.
2. “My sin is ever before me” – Guilt cannot be relieved or minimized. It is a constant reminder of the broken fellowship and its consequences.

3. “Against You, You only, I have sinned” – This is a theological statement (cf. Gen. 20:6; 2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 41:4). Sin is known only when human action is put up against a divine command (cf. Rom. 3:20,25; 4:15; 5:13,20; Acts 17:30).

This is not to depreciate the pain of victims but to note that ultimately all sin is against the one and only Holy God!

51:4c-d The TEV catches the meaning of these two lines of poetry.

“So you are right in judging me; you are justified in condemning me.”

This is quoted by Paul from the LXX in Rom. 3:4. It is introduced by “let God be found true, though every man be found a liar.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:5-9

**⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.
⁶Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being,
And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.
⁷Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
⁸Make me to hear joy and gladness,
Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.
⁹Hide Your face from my sins
And blot out all my iniquities.**

51:5 This verse may go with verses 1-4. It is not an excuse but the terrible reality of the fallen human condition (cf. Gen. 8:21; 1 Kgs. 8:46; Job 14:1-4; 15:14; 25:4; Ps. 58:3; Pro. 20:9; Isa. 48:8; Rom. 3:9-18,23; Eph. 2:3; all express the reality of the fall of mankind in Genesis 3. It is true that most rabbis emphasized the origin of sin as Genesis 6. The Apostle Paul is the NT author who focuses on Genesis 3 as the source of sin and its consequences).

For me the theological issue is the sinfulness of children before the age of moral responsibility. Calvinism has emphasized the total depravity of mankind, in all areas, from birth to death. I am more drawn to the concept of informed human volition. This means that until a child knows he/she is breaking God’s laws, they are not! Sin involves open-eyed rebellion! We are sinners in Adam/Eve (cf. Rom. 5:12-21) and also we choose to sin. Both are true!

51:6-9 The psalmist is asking God to restore him to his previous place/state of fellowship. He has acknowledged his sin (51:3-4) and asked for forgiveness (51:1-2). This strophe repeats these.

1. acknowledge his sins
 - a. v. 5
 - b. two IMPERATIVES
 - (1) “hide Your face from my sins” – BDB 711, KB 771, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
 - (2) “blot out all my iniquities” – same as v. 1 (the “book of God” is also mentioned in Ps. 139:16, see note on “secret” below)
2. desires forgiveness
 - a. God desires “truth in the innermost being” (BDB 711, note the use of “secret” [BDB 712] in Ps. 139:15)
 - b. God please make that truth known

- c. prayer requests (6 IMPERFECTS)
 - (1) purify me – BDB 306, KB 305, *Piel* IMPERFECT
 - (2) I shall be clean – BDB 372, KB 369, *Qal* IMPERFECT (i.e., result of being purified)
 - (3) wash me – BDB 460, KB 459, *Piel* IMPERFECT
 - (4) I shall be whiter than snow – BDB 526, KB 517, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT (i.e., result of being washed, cf. Isa. 1:18)
 - (5) make me to hear joy (BDB 965) and gladness (BDB 970) – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
 - (6) let the bones. . .rejoice – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* IMPERFECT (“broken bones” were an OT idiom of divine judgment, cf. Isa. 38:13; Lam. 3:4)

The psalmist deeply desires that the intimate fellowship he had known with God, which was damaged by his sin, be restored by God’s grace and mercy.

51:6 “desires” This VERB (BDB 342, KB 339, *Qal* PERFECT) is used in verse 6 of that which God “desires” (i.e., truth in the innermost being) and in 51:16 of that which He does not desire (*Qal* IMPERFECT, i.e., perfunctory sacrifices or sacrifices for intentional sins).

51:7 “hyssop” The small desert plant (BDB 23) was used in a bunch to sprinkle liquids for ritualistic ceremonies.

- 1. blood of the Passover lamb on the doorpost of homes – Exod. 12:21-22
- 2. ceremony for cleansing of the leper – Lev. 14:4,6 (for leprous buildings, Lev. 14:19,51,52)
- 3. in connection to the ritual of burning the Red Heifer (i.e., ashes of purification) – Num. 19:6,18
- 4. in connection with Moses sprinkling the book of the law – Heb. 9:19, cf. Exod. 24:6-8

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:10-13

- ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- ¹¹Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
- ¹²Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.
- ¹³Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.

51:10-13 This strophe also has several prayer requests (IMPERATIVES, JUSSIVES) which call for a personal faith renewal. This must be brought about by the sovereign acts of God, but the psalmist must present himself for it to be done.

- 1. create in me a clean heart – BDB 135, KB 153, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ezek. 36:26-27; he desires a miracle or recreation (*bara* used only of God, Gen. 1:1)
- 2. renew a steadfast spirit within me – BDB 293, KB 293, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 78:37
- 3. do not cast me away from Your presence – BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. 2 Kgs. 13:23 and negative in 2 Kgs. 24:20; Jer. 7:15
- 4. do not take Your Holy Spirit from me – BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Isa. 63:10,11; Ezek. 36:26-27
- 5. restore to me the joy of Your salvation – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

6. sustain me with a willing spirit – BDB 701, KB 759, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense to match #3,4

Notice the emphasis on the internal, personal aspect of faith (i.e., Isa. 26:9). The result of this spiritual renewal will be

1. I will teach transgressors Your ways – BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel* COHORTATIVE; note the fellowship and knowledge of God must come first, cf. Ezra 7:10
2. sinners will be converted (lit. “turn back”) – same VERB as 51:12a, “to restore,” but *Qal* IMPERFECT

51:10 “heart” See Special Topic at Ps. 4:7. Mankind’s unique creation in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) and personally “fashioned/formed” by God (Gen. 2:7), makes him a

1. physical creature, like the other animals on this planet (cf. *nephesh*)
2. spiritual creature, uniquely suited for fellowship with God; this spiritual aspect goes by several metaphors/analogies/terms
 - a. heart, i.e., Ps. 36:1; 39:3; 55:4; 109:22
 - b. kidneys/bowels, i.e., Ps. 22:14; Jer. 4:19; 31:20; Lam. 1:20; 2:11
 - c. spirit, i.e., Isa. 57:16; Zech. 12:1
 - d. thoughts, Ps. 94:19

▣ **“spirit”** The term (BDB 924) is used several times in this Psalm.

1. “a steadfast spirit,” 51:10
2. “Your Holy Spirit,” 51:11
3. “a willing spirit, 51:12
4. “a broken spirit, 51:17

SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT IN THE BIBLE

- I. The Greek terms
 - A. *pneō*, to blow
 - B. *pnoē*, wind, breath
 - C. *pneuma*, spirit, wind
 - D. *pneumatikos*, pertaining to the spirit
 - E. *pneumatikōs*, spiritually
- II. Greek philosophical background (*pneuma*)
 - A. Aristotle used the term as the life force that develops from birth until self-discipline
 - B. The Stoics used the term as synonymous to *psuchē*, (soul) even *nous* (mind) in the sense of the five physical senses and the human intellect
 - C. Greek thought – the term became equivalent to divine action (i.e., divination, magic, occult, prophecy, etc.)
- III. Old Testament (*ruah*)
 - A. The actions of the monotheistic God (i.e., Spirit, used about 90 times in the OT)
 1. positive, Genesis 1:2
 2. negative, 1 Sam.16:14-16,23; 1 Kgs. 22:21-22; Isa. 29:10
 - B. The God-given life force in humanity (i.e., God’s breath, cf. Gen. 2:7)
 - C. The Septuagint translates *ruah* by *pneuma* (used about 100 times in the LXX)

- D. In later rabbinical writings, apocalyptic writing and the Dead Sea Scrolls, influenced by Zoroastrianism, *pneuma* is used of angels and demons

IV. New Testament (*pneuma*)

- A. God's special presence, power, and equipping
- B. The Spirit is connected to God's activity in the church

1. prophecy
2. miracles
3. boldness to proclaim the gospel
4. wisdom (i.e., the gospel)
5. joy
6. bring in the new age
7. conversion (i.e., wooing and indwelling)
8. Christlikeness
9. special gifts of ministry
10. prays for believers

The Spirit awakens mankind's desire for fellowship with God, for which they were created. This fellowship is possible because of the person and work of Jesus, God's Messiah. The new spiritual awakening leads to Christlike living, serving, and trusting.

- C. Best understood as a spiritual continuum with the Holy Spirit on one end and mankind as a physical creature of this planet, but also a spiritual creature in God's image, at the other end.
- D. Paul is the NT author who develops a theology of the Spirit/spirit.
 1. Paul uses Spirit to contrast flesh (i.e., sin nature)
 2. Paul uses spirit to contrast the physical
 3. Paul uses Spirit/spirit to contrast human thinking, knowing, and being
- E. Some examples from 1 Corinthians
 1. the Holy Spirit, 12:3
 2. the power and wisdom of God conveyed through the Holy Spirit, 2:4-5
 3. God's actions in the believer
 - a. new mind-set, 2:12; 14:14,32
 - b. new temple, 3:16; 6:19-20
 - c. new life (i.e., morality), 6:9-11
 - d. new life symbolized in baptism, 12:13
 - e. one with God (i.e., conversion), 6:17
 - f. God's wisdom, not the world's wisdom, 2:12-15; 14:14,32,37
 - g. spiritual giftedness of every believer for ministry, chapters 12 and 14
 4. the spiritual in contrast to the physical, 9:11; 10:3; 15:44
 5. spiritual realm in contrast to physical realm, 2:11; 5:5; 7:34; 15:45; 16:18
 6. a way of referring to a human's spiritual/inner life as distinct from one's physical body, 7:34
- F. Humans live in two realms by creation (i.e., the physical and the spiritual). Mankind fell from intimacy with God (Genesis 3). Through Christ's life, teachings, death, resurrection, and promised return, the Spirit woos fallen humans to exercise faith in the gospel, at which point they

are restored to fellowship with God. The Spirit is that personal part of the Trinity which characterizes the New Age of righteousness. The Spirit is God the Father's agent and the Son's Advocate in this "age." A problem exists because the new age has occurred in time, while the old age of sinful rebellion still exists. The Spirit transforms the old into the new, even while they both exist.

51:11b Many commentators believe this line of poetry is a reference to 1 Sam.11:6; 16:14; 18:12, where Saul initially had the Spirit but after his repeated sins, the Spirit left him and went to David.

My own denomination has used this Psalm, especially verse 12, to assert that no one can lose their salvation because it says, "restore the joy of Your salvation." However, Saul's spiritual status is uncertain. I have chosen to at least provide my understanding of these issues by

1. referring you to the Special Topic: Apostasy at Ps. 26:8-12
2. referring you to the Special Topic: Perseverance at Ps. 7:12
3. inserting the following Special Topic: Assurance (see below)

SPECIAL TOPIC: ASSURANCE

- A. Can Christians know they are saved (cf. 1 John 5:13)? 1 John has three tests or evidences.
 4. Doctrinal (belief, 1 John 5:1,5,10; 2:18-25; 4:1-6,14-16; 5:11-12)
 5. Lifestyle (obedience, 1 John 5:2-3; 2:3-6; 3:1-10; 5:18)
 6. Social (love, 1 John 5:2-3; 2:7-11; 3:11-18; 4:7-12, 16-21)
- B. Assurance has become a denominational issue.
 1. John Calvin based assurance on God's election. He said that we can never be certain in this life.
 2. John Wesley based assurance on religious experience. He believed that we have the ability to live above known sin.
 3. Roman Catholics and the Church of Christ base assurance on an authoritative Church. The group to which one belongs is the key to assurance.
 4. Most evangelicals base assurance on the promises of the Bible, linked to the fruit of the Spirit in the life of the believer (cf. Gal. 5:22-23).
- C. I think fallen mankind's primary assurance is linked to the character of the Triune God.
 1. God the Father's love
 - a. John 3:16; 10:28-29
 - b. Romans 8:31-39
 - c. Ephesians 2:5,8-9
 - d. Philippians 1:6
 - e. 1 Peter 1:3-5
 - f. 1 John 4:7-21
 2. God the Son's actions
 - a. death on our behalf
 - 1) Acts 2:23
 - 2) Romans 5:6-11

- 3) 2 Corinthians 5:21
 - 4) 1 John 2:2; 4:9-10
 - b. high priestly prayer (John 17:12)
 - c. continuing intercession
 - 1) Romans 8:34
 - 2) Hebrews 7:25
 - 3) 1 John 2:1
 - 3. God the Spirit's ministry
 - a. calling (John 6:44,65)
 - b. sealing
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5
 - 2) Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:3
 - c. assuring
 - 1) Romans 8:16-17
 - 2) 1 John 5:7-13
- D. But humans must respond to God's covenant offer (both initially and continually).
- 1. believers must turn from sin (repentance) and to God through Jesus (faith)
 - a. Mark 1:15
 - b. Acts 3:16,19; 20:21
 - 2. believers must receive God's offer in Christ
 - a. John 1:12; 3:16
 - b. Romans 5:1 (and by analogy 10:9-13)
 - c. Ephesians 2:5,8-9
 - 3. believers must continue in the faith
 - a. Mark 13:13
 - b. 1 Corinthians 15:2
 - c. Galatians 6:9
 - d. Hebrews 3:14
 - e. 2 Peter 1:10
 - f. Jude vv. 20-21
 - g. Revelation 2:2-3,7,10,17,19,25-26; 3:5,10,11,21
 - 4. believers face three tests
 - a. doctrinal (1 John 5:1,5,10; 2:18-25; 4:1-6,14-16)
 - b. lifestyle (1 John 5:2-3; 2:3-6; 3:1-10)
 - c. social (1 John 5:2-3; 2:7-11; 3:11-18; 4:7-12, 16-21)
- E. Assurance is difficult because
- 1. often believers seek certain experiences not promised in the Bible
 - 2. often believers do not fully understand the gospel
 - 3. often believers continue to willfully sin (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 9:27; 1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 4:10; 2 Pet. 1:8-11)

4. certain personality types (i.e. perfectionists) can never accept God's unconditional acceptance and love
5. in the Bible there are examples of false professions (cf. Matt. 13:3-23; 7:21-23; Mark 4:14-20; 2 Pet. 2:19-20; 1 John 2:18-19)

▣ **“Your Holy Spirit”** In most of the OT, the “Spirit” is a force of God (i.e., Gen. 1:2), not a distinct person (but note Isa. 63:10-11). However, this concept of the personhood of the Spirit is developed in the NT. Two Special Topics help clarify the point.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT

In the OT “the Spirit of God” (i.e., *ruach*) was a force which accomplished YHWH's purpose, but there is no hint that it was personal (i.e., OT monotheism). However, in the NT the full personality and personhood of the Spirit is documented:

1. He can be blasphemed (cf. Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:29)
2. He teaches (cf. Luke 12:12; John 14:26)
3. He bears witness (cf. John 15:26)
4. He convicts, guides (cf. John 16:7-15)
5. He is called “who” (i.e., *hos*, cf. Eph. 1:14)
6. He can be grieved (cf. Eph. 4:30)
7. He can be quenched (cf. 1 Thess. 5:19)

Trinitarian texts (here are three of many) also speak of three persons (see Special Topic: Trinity at Isa. 6:8).

1. Matt. 28:19
2. 2 Cor. 13:14
3. 1 Pet. 1:2

The Spirit is linked to human activity.

1. Acts 15:28
2. Rom. 8:26
3. 1 Cor. 12:11
4. Eph. 4:30

At the very beginning of Acts the Spirit's role is emphasized. Pentecost was not the beginning of the work of the Spirit, but a new chapter. Jesus always had the Spirit. His baptism was not the beginning of the work of the Spirit, but a new chapter. Luke prepares the church for a new chapter of effective ministry. Jesus is still the focus, the Spirit is still the effective means and the Father's love, forgiveness, and restoration of all humans made in His image is the goal!

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

Notice the activity of all three Persons of the Trinity in unified contexts. The term “trinity,” first coined by Tertullian, is not a biblical word, but the concept is pervasive.

- A. the Gospels
 1. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19 (and parallels)
 2. John 14:26

- B. Acts – Acts 2:32-33, 38-39
- C. Paul
 - 1. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
 - 2. 1 Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
 - 3. 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14
 - 4. Gal. 4:4-6
 - 5. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
 - 6. 1 Thess. 1:2-5
 - 7. 2 Thess. 2:13
 - 8. Titus 3:4-6
- D. Peter – 1 Pet. 1:2
- E. Jude – vv. 20-21

A plurality in God is hinted at in the OT.

- A. Use of PLURALS for God
 - 1. Name *Elohim* is PLURAL, but when used of God always has a SINGULAR VERB
 - 2. “Us” in Genesis 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7
- B. The Angel of the Lord was a visible representative of Deity
 - 1. Genesis 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
 - 2. Exodus 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19
 - 3. Judges 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
 - 4. Zechariah 3:1-2
- C. God and His Spirit are separate, Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 104:30; Isa. 63:9-11; Ezek. 37:13-14
- D. God (YHWH) and Messiah (*Adon*) are separate, Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1; Zech. 2:8-11; 10:9-12
- E. The Messiah and the Spirit are separate, Zech. 12:10
- F. All three are mentioned in Isa. 48:16; 61:1

The Deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit caused problems for the strict, monotheistic, early believers.

- 1. Tertullian – subordinated the Son to the Father
- 2. Origen – subordinated the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit
- 3. Arius – denied Deity to the Son and Spirit
- 4. Monarchianism – believed in a successive chronological manifestation of the one God as Father, Son, and Spirit

The Trinity is a historically developed formulation informed by the biblical material.

- 1. the full Deity of Jesus, equal to the Father, was affirmed in A.D. 325 by the Council of Nicea (cf. John 1:1; Phil. 2:6; Titus 2:13)
- 2. the full personality and Deity of the Spirit equal to the Father and Son was affirmed in A.D. 381 by the Council of Constantinople
- 3. the doctrine of the Trinity is fully expressed in Augustine’s work *De Trinitate*

There is truly mystery here. But the NT seems to affirm one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:14-17

- ¹⁴**Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation;
Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.**
- ¹⁵**O LORD, open my lips,
That my mouth may declare Your praise.**
- ¹⁶**For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;
You are not pleased with burnt offering.**
- ¹⁷**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.**

51:14-17 This strophe continues the thought of

1. deliver – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, the psalmist was sinful and needed to be forgiven. Verse 14 may link to David's murder of Uriah (lit. "bloods," BDB 196, assumed to refer to "bloodguiltiness," that is, "murder of an innocent person").
2. the "teach transgressors" (BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel* COHORTATIVE) of v. 13a is explained/defined
 - a. my tongue will joyfully sing (David was a singer) of Your righteousness (this key term [BDB 842] basically means a standard, ruler, straight edge. All the words for "sin" are a deviation from the standard; in this context it has the connotation of "vindication" or "just actions," cf. Ps. 71:2,15; see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5).
 - (1) open my lips
 - (2) my mouth may declare Your praise

The new thought is begun in 51:16-17. There was no sacrifice listed in Leviticus 1-7 that dealt with intentional, premeditated sin (cf. Lev. 4:2,22,27; 5:15-18; 22:14; Num. 15:27-28). If there were he would give it (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* COHORTATIVE), but there was not, so he threw himself on the mercy of God. He trusted/believed that God would not reject (both *Niphal* PARTICIPLES)

1. a broken heart over sin (BDB 990, cf. Ps. 34:19; Isa. 61:1; Jer. 23:9)
2. a contrite heart (lit. "crushed, BDB 194, cf. Isa. 57:15)

This refers to a Rom. 12:1-2 kind of worshiper. Repentance has an effect on God (cf. Ps. 34:18)!

51:15

NASB (1970) "LORD"

NASB (1995) "Lord"

The MT has *Adon*, not YHWH. The covenant name for Israel's God is not found in Book II of the Psalter as frequently as in Book I. Some scholars speculate that the compiler of Book II changed many of the references of YHWH to *Elohim*.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:18-19

- ¹⁸**By Your favor do good to Zion;
Build the walls of Jerusalem.**
- ¹⁹**Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices,
In burnt offering and whole burnt offering;
Then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.**

51:18-19 The Psalm closes with a seemingly separate thought. There is an unexpected switch from an individual to a national prayer for God’s blessing (“do good,” BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) on Jerusalem. The prayer implies that Jerusalem had problems.

1. build her walls
2. restore her sacrificial system

Many commentators have used verse 16 to depreciate sacrifice, but because of 51:23, it is best to see it as emphasizing the difference between “intentional” and “unintentional” sin.

Also notice that at no time would these two verses fit David’s life. There is no MSS evidence they were added after the compositions or compilation of the Psalm.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. The psalmist gives two reasons for God to be gracious to him. What are they and why are they significant?
2. List the different words used to describe forgiveness in this Psalm.
3. Explain verse 4 in your own words.
4. What does verse 5 mean in an OT setting?
5. Does God take the Holy Spirit away from sinners?
6. Explain verses 16-17's relationship to verse 19. Explain the difference between an “intentional sin” and an “unintentional sin” in relation to the sacrificial system.
7. How are verses 18-19 related to the rest of the Psalm?

PSALM 52

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Futility of Boastful Wickedness <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Maskil of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said to him, "David has come to the house of Ahimelech."	The End of the Wicked and the Peace of the Godly	God's Imminent Judgment Against a Tyrant	God's Judgment and Grace	The Fate of Cynics
52:1-4	52:1-4	52:1-4	52:1-4	52:1-2 52:3-4
52:5-7	52:5-7	52:5-7	52:5-7	52:5 52:6-7
52:8-9	52:8-9	52:8-9	52:8-9	52:8 52:9

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Notice this Psalm is addressed to wicked people (use of COLLECTIVE SINGULAR). Most Psalms are addressed to God.
- B. This Psalm is a series of strophes that contrast the plight of the wicked with the security of the righteous.
- C. Notice it is the speech of the two groups that reveals their hearts (motives, cf. Matt. 12:34-37).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 52:1-4

- ¹Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man?
The lovingkindness of God *endures* all day long.
- ²Your tongue devises destruction,
Like a sharp razor, O worker of deceit.
- ³You love evil more than good,
Falsehood more than speaking what is right. Selah.
- ⁴You love all words that devour,
O deceitful tongue.

52:1 This is antithetical parallelism. Throughout the Psalm the wicked and the righteous are contrasted (JPSOA). The Peshitta reverses the MT and comes up with “against the innocent every day.”

The LXX makes the whole verse refer to the “wicked.” The second line has “of lawlessness all day long.” AB (p. 11) makes the second line sarcasm, “O devoted of *El*.”

▣ **“boast”** This VERB (BDB 237, KB 248, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) in the *Hiphil* is often used of self praise (cf. 1 Kgs. 20:11; Ps. 49:6; Pro. 20:14; 27:1; Jer. 49:4). In Jer. 9:23-24 the term has both negative (false boasting) and positive (true grounds for boasting) aspects.

▣ **“O mighty man”** This is one of three VOCATIVES used to describe wicked people.

1. O mighty man – BDB 150, they are mighty in their boasting about their sin; this is biting sarcasm
2. O worker of deceit – BDB 793 I CONSTRUCT BDB 941 I
3. O deceitful tongue – BDB 546 CONSTRUCT 941; not the same root as #2, but very close (i.e., personified evil speech)

▣ **“lovingkindness”** See Special Topic at Ps. 5:7.

▣ **“all day long”** This denotes an extended period of time (i.e., forever). The concept of “forever” is repeated several times in this Psalm.

1. God’s judgment – v. 5a
2. the righteous’ trust in God’s lovingkindness – 52:8b
3. the righteous’ thanksgiving to God – 52:9a

52:2 We need to remember that words matter. They can bless or curse (cf. James 3:1-12). There is power in words (cf. v. 4). We will give an account to God for our words (cf. Matt. 12:34-37). Speech reveals the heart.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HUMAN SPEECH

I. OPENING THOUGHTS FROM PROVERBS

- A. Language is part of the image of God in mankind (i.e., creation is spoken into existence and God talks to His human creation). It is a vital part of our personhood.

- B. Human speech enables us to communicate to others how we feel about life. Therefore, it reveals who we really are (Pro. 18:2; 4:23 [20-27]). Speech is the acid test of the person (Pro. 23:7).
- C. We are social creatures. We are concerned with acceptance and affirmation. We need it from God and from our fellow humans. Words have the power to meet these needs in both positive (Pro. 17:10) and negative (Pro. 12:18) ways.
- D. There is tremendous power in human speech (Pro. 18:20-21)—power to bless and heal (Pro. 10:11,21) and power to curse and destroy (Pro. 11:9).
- E. We reap what we sow (Pro. 12:14).

II. PRINCIPLES FROM PROVERBS

- A. The negative and destructive potential of human speech
 - 1. the words of evil men (Pro. 1:11-19; 10:6; 11:9,11; 12:2-6)
 - 2. the words of the adulteress (5:2-5; 6:24-35; 7:5ff; 9:13-18; 22:14)
 - 3. the words of the liar (6:12-15,19; 10:18; 12:17-19,22; 14:5,25; 17:4; 19:5,9,28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18; 26:23-28)
 - 4. the words of the fool (10:10,14; 14:3; 15:14; 18:6-8)
 - 5. the words of false witnesses (6:19; 12:17; 19:5,9,28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18)
 - 6. the words of a gossip (6:14,19; 11:13; 16:27-28; 20:19; 25:23; 26:20)
 - 7. the words too quickly spoken (6:1-5; 12:18; 20:25; 29:20)
 - 8. the words of flattery (29:5)
 - 9. too many words (10:14,19,23; 11:13; 13:3,16; 14:23; 15:2; 17:27-28; 18:2; 21:23; 29:20)
 - 10. perverted words (17:20; 19:1)
- B. the positive, healing and edifying potential of human speech
 - 1. the words of the righteous (Pro. 10:11,20-21,31-32; 12:14; 13:2; 15:23; 16:13; 18:20)
 - 2. the words of the discerning (10:13; 11:12)
 - 3. the words of knowledge (15:1,4,7,8; 20:15)
 - 4. the words of healing (15:4)
 - 5. the words of a gentle answer (15:1,4,18,23; 16:1; 25:15)
 - 6. the words of a pleasant answer (12:25; 15:26,30; 16:24)
 - 7. the words of the law (22:17-21)

III. THE OT PATTERN CONTINUES IN THE NT

- A. Human speech enables us to communicate to others how we feel about life; therefore, it reveals who we really are (Matt. 12:33-37; 15:1-20; Mark 7:2-23).
- B. We are social creatures. We are concerned with acceptance and affirmation. We need it from God and from our fellow man. Words have the power to meet these needs in both positive (2 Tim. 3:15-17) and negative (James 3:2-12) ways.
- C. There is tremendous power in human speech; power to bless (Eph. 4:29) and power to curse (James 3:9). We are responsible for what we say (Matt. 12:36-37; James 3:2-12).
- D. We will be judged by our words (Matt. 12:33-37; Luke 6:39-45) as well as our deeds (Matt. 25:31-46). We reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7).

52:3 These are shocking parallel lines of poetry. Just think how far humans made in the image and likeness of God have fallen! They have become polar opposites of what they were intended to be!

The word “love” (BDB 12) is used twice in shocking ways.

1. they love evil more than good, v. 3
2. they love all words that devour, v. 4



NASB “than speaking what is right”
NKJV “than speaking righteousness”
NRSV “than speaking the truth”
TEV “than truth”
NJB “to uprightness”
JPSOA “to speaking truthfully”
REB “than truthful speech”
LXX “than speaking justice”

The reason there is such variety in the translations is because this is an unusual use of “righteousness” (BDB 841). It is often used in the sense of “right” (cf. Ps. 23:3) but here in the sense of “true” (cf. Ps. 58:1).

52:4 “devour” This NOUN (BDB 118 I) basically means to swallow and is used as an image for destruction.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 52:15-7

**⁵But God will break you down forever;
He will snatch you up and tear you away from *your* tent,
And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah.
⁶The righteous will see and fear,
And will laugh at him, *saying*,
⁷“Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge,
But trusted in the abundance of his riches
And was strong in his *evil* desire.”**

52:5-7 This strophe contrasts what God will do with the wicked and the response of the righteous.

1. God’s actions toward the wicked result in their death.
 - a. He will break (lit. “pull down”) them down forever – BDB 683, KB 736, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - b. He will snatch up – BDB 367, KB 363, *Qal* IMPERFECT; this is a rare word only here in the Psalms, but note its other three occurrences refer to “fire taken to oneself,” cf. Pro. 6:27; 25:22; Isa. 30:14)
 - c. He will tear you away from your tent – BDB 650, KB 702, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - d. He will uproot them from the land of the living – BDB 1057, KB 1658, *Piel* PERFECT with *waw*
2. The reaction of the righteous to God’s acts of judgment:
 - a. will see – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - b. will fear (i.e., repent in awe) – BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - c. will laugh at their judgment – BDB 965, KB 1315, *Qal* IMPERFECT; God laughs in Ps. 2:40; 37:13; personified wisdom laughs in Pro. 1:26; here the righteous laugh when the judgment of God falls on those who have rejected Him and persecuted them. They “laugh” in the sense of “they reap what they sowed.” Justice defeats injustice!

52:5 This imagery of “tear you away from your tent” is an idiom related to the days of Israel’s nomadic living in tents (nomadic and later the Exodus). This same imagery can be seen in

1. Saul – 1 Sam. 13:2 (i.e., to your homes)
2. Sheba – 2 Sam. 20:1 (i.e., to your homes)
3. Jeroboam I – 1 Kgs. 12:16; 2 Chr. 10:16 (i.e., to our own country)
4. Paul – 2 Cor. 5:1-10 (tent as metaphor for the human body)

▣ **“forever”** The concept of “forever” is mentioned in the Psalm’s three lines.

1. God’s judgment is “forever,” v. 5 (BDB 664, cf. Job 4:20; 14:20; 20:7; 23:7; Ps. 9:7)
2. God’s blessing is “forever and ever,” 52:8
 - a. forever – BDB 761 (see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5)
 - b. ever – BDB 723 I (compound of them both in Ps. 9:5; 10:16; 21:4; 45:6,17; 48:14; 104:5; 119:44; 145:1,2,21)
3. faithful followers’ thanksgiving is “forever,” v. 9 – BDB 761

▣ **“the land of the living”** This CONSTRUCT (BDB 75, BDB 313) is an idiom for life (cf. Job 28:13; Ps. 27:13; 116:9; 142:5; Isa. 38:11; Jer. 11:19). It is in contrast to “the land of the dead,” which would be *Sheol* or the Pit (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6).

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Psalm 3:2 and Intro. to Psalms, VII.

52:7 Verse 7 is a description of the person referred to in verses 1-4.

1. he would not make God his refuge
2. he trusted in the abundance of his riches, cf. Job 31:24-28; Ps. 49:6-9; Pro. 11:28
3. he was strong in his evil desire

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 52:8-9

⁸But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God;

I trust in the lovingkindness of God forever and ever.

⁹I will give You thanks forever, because You have done *it*,

And I will wait on Your name, for *it is good*, in the presence of Your godly ones.

52:8-9 As verse 7 characterized the wicked person (i.e., uprooted), verse 8 characterizes the righteous person (i.e., planted).

1. He is like a green olive tree in the house of God, cf. Ps. 1:3; 92:12-14; 128:3; Jer. 11:16; 17:5-8.
2. He trusts in God’s lovingkindness forever, cf. Ps. 13:5; this lovingkindness is forever, cf. 52:16; the wicked “trust” in their own riches.
3. He gives thanks to God forever – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense.
4. He will wait on His name – BDB 875, KB 1082, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense.

52:9 “Your name” It is characterized as “it is good.” See Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12.

▣ **“in the presence of Your godly ones”** This could refer to

1. angels
2. faithful followers at the temple (cf. v. 8, “house of God”)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is unusual about this Psalm?
2. List the different VOCATIVES used to describe or personify the wicked.
3. Compare what God will do to the wicked versus the righteous in verses 5-6.
4. What do the wicked do that alienates them from God?
5. Who are “the godly ones” of verse 9?

PSALM 53*

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Folly and Wickedness MT Intro For the choir director. According to Mahalath. A Maskil of David.	Folly of the Godless, and Restoration of Israel	Condemnation of a Cynical and Unrighteous Age	Human Wickedness	The Fate of the Godless
53:1-3	53:1	53:1	53:1	53:1
	53:2-3	53:2	53:2-3	53:2
		53:3		53:3
53:4-6	53:4-5	53:4	53:4	53:4
		53:5	53:5	53:5
	53:6	53:6	53:6	53:6

*This Psalm is almost exactly a duplicate of Psalm 14, except YHWH has been changed to *Elohim*. See notes there.

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 53:1-3

¹The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God,"

They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice;

There is no one who does good.

²God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men

To see if there is anyone who understands,

Who seeks after God.

**³Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt;
There is no one who does good, not even one.**

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 53:4-6

**⁴Have the workers of wickedness no knowledge,
Who eat up My people *as though* they ate bread
And have not called upon God?**

**⁵There they were in great fear *where* no fear had been;
For God scattered the bones of him who encamped against you;
You put *them* to shame, because God had rejected them.**

**⁶Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!
When God restores His captive people,
Let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.**

This Psalm is almost exactly a duplicate of Psalm 14, except “YHWH” has been changed to “*Elohim*.” See notes there.

PSALM 54

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Defense Against Enemies <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director on stringed instruments. A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, "Is not David hiding himself among us?"	Answered Prayer For Deliverance From Adversaries	Prayer For Deliverance From Personal Enemies	A Prayer For Protection From Enemies	Appeal to God, the Just Judge
54:1-3	54:1-3	54:1-2 54:3	54:1-3	54:1-2 54:3
54:4-5	54:4-5	54:4-5	54:4-5	54:4-5
54:6-7	54:6-7	54:6-7	54:6-7	54:6-7

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FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 54:1-3

- ¹Save me, O God, by Your name,
And vindicate me by Your power.
²Hear my prayer, O God;
Give ear to the words of my mouth.
³For strangers have risen against me

And violent men have sought my life;

They have not set God before them.

Selah.

54:1-3 This strophe shows the historical setting as one of personal attack, apparently by other covenant people. Notice the prayer requests.

1. save me – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. vindicate (i.e., judge rightly) me – BDB 192, KB 220, *Qal* IMPERFECT used between three IMPERATIVES and parallel to the first. It is functioning as an IMPERATIVE OF REQUEST after examples in Ugaritic poetry (AB, p. 24). It denotes a “legal verdict.” The psalmist is asking God for judicial acquittal. He has been unfairly accused.
3. hear my prayer – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 17:6
4. give ear – BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE in a synonymous parallel relationship to #3, cf. Ps. 5:1; 55:1; 86:7

▣ **“O God”** This is the name for God (*Elohim*) that refers to Him as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Gen. 1:6, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1). It appears twice, 54:1a and 54:2a. It is paralleled by

1. Your name (cf. Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12)
2. Your power, cf. 2 Chr. 20:6

54:2 The psalmist’s enemies/adversaries are described in this verse.

1. strangers (BDB 266 I, cf. Ps. 44:20; 109:11) have arisen against me, 54:3a. This is usually used of other covenant people.
2. violent men (BDB 792). This is usually used of enemies of other nations (i.e., invaders, cf. Isa. 13:11; Ezek. 28:7; 30:11; 31:12; 32:12)
3. they have not set God before them; this could refer to
 - a. godless Israelites, cf. Ps. 14:1; 36:1-4; 53:1
 - b. Gentiles (i.e., national enemies)
4. in v. 5 he calls them “those who lie in wait for me” (i.e., so as to murder)

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Psalm 3:2 and Intro to Psalms, VII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 54:4-5

⁴Behold, God is my helper;

The Lord is the sustainer of my soul.

⁵He will recompense the evil to my foes;

Destroy them in Your faithfulness.

54:4-5 As the psalmist described his enemies in v. 3, in vv. 4-5 he characterizes God and asks for Him to act against his foes.

1. God is my helper – BDB 740, KB 810, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Ps. 27:9; 30:10; 37:40; 118:7
2. the Lord (*Adon*, BDB 10) is the sustainer of my soul (BDB 701, KB 759, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Ps. 37:17,24; 41:12; 51:12; 71:6; 145:14)
3. He will recompense (lit. return, BDB 996, KB 1427). MT has *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, but the Masoretic scholars suggested that it be read (*Qere*) as a *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense.

4. The psalmist asked God to destroy (lit. “put to silence,” BDB 856, KB 1035, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 143:12) his enemies as they were trying to silence him, cf. Ps. 18:4; 69:4; 73:27; 94:23; 101:5,8

54:5

NASB, NRSV	“in Your faithfulness”
NKJV, LXX	“in Your truth”
TEV	“because he is faithful”
NJB	“in your constancy”
JPSOA	“by Your faithfulness”
REB	“show yourself faithful”

The MT has “faithfulness” (BDB 54, see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1). It seems to link back to the psalmist’s assertions about God in verse 4.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 54:6-7

⁶Willingly I will sacrifice to You;
I will give thanks to Your name, O LORD, for it is good.
⁷For He has delivered me from all trouble,
And my eye has looked *with satisfaction* upon my enemies.

54:6 This closing strophe (54:6-7) expresses the confidence of the psalmist that God (YHWH, v. 6) will act on his behalf. When He does then the psalmist will

1. sacrifice to You – BDB 256, KB 261, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
2. give thanks to Your name – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense; either the “name” is good or giving thanks to YHWH is good, cf. Ps. 92:1

Psalm 54:6 has a rare use of the covenant name for Israel’s God, YHWH, in Book 2 of the Psalter.



NASB	“willingly”
NKJV, REB	“freely”
NRSV	“with a freewill offering”
TEV, NJB	“gladly”
JPSOA	“a freewill offering”

The MT has a PREPOSITION and a NOUN (BDB 621). It can refer to

1. voluntariness
2. freewill offering

Here #1 fits best.

54:7 “He” The MT has “it,” which would relate to “Your name” in verse 6 (cf. JPSOA).

Not only is the psalmist “delivered” (BDB 664, KIB 717, *Hiphil* PERFECT) but he “sees” (BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* PERFECT) the defeat of his enemies (cf. Ps. 59:10; 92:11; 112:8; 118:7; this is culturally similar to “laugh at him” in Ps. 52:6).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What does the word “vindicate” mean?
2. Who are the enemies mentioned in verses 3 and 5?
3. Explain the significance of “name” (vv. 1,6).

PSALM 55

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for the Destruction of the Treacherous <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director on stringed instruments. A Maskil of David.	Trust in God Concerning the Treachery of Friends	A Prayer For Deliverance From Personal Enemies	The Prayer of Someone Betrayed by a Friend	Prayer When Slandered
55:1-3	55:1-3	55:1-3	55:1-3	55:1-2b 55:2c-3
55:4-8	55:4-8	55:4-8	55:4-9a	55:4-5 55:6-7 55:8-9b
55:9-11	55:9-11	55:9-11	55:9b-11	55:9c-10a 55:10b-11
55:12-15	55:12-14	55:12-15	55:12-15	55:12 55:13-14b 55:14c-15
55:16-21	55:15 55:16-19	55:16-19	55:16-19	55:16-17b 55:17c-18 55:19
55:22-23	55:20-21 55:22 55:23	55:20-21 55:22 55:23	55:20-21 55:22 55:23	55:20-21 55:22 55:23a-b 55:23c

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 55:1-3

¹Give ear to my prayer, O God;
 And do not hide Yourself from my supplication.
²Give heed to me and answer me;
 I am restless in my complaint and am surely distracted,
³Because of the voice of the enemy,
 Because of the pressure of the wicked;
 For they bring down trouble upon me
 And in anger they bear a grudge against me.

55:1-3 This, like many Psalms in this section, deals with personal attacks. This Psalm is particularly painful because the assailants are friends (cf. vv. 12-14).

There are several IMPERATIVES OF REQUEST, one JUSSIVE, and two COHORTATIVES.

1. give ear – BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 5:1; 17:1; 39:12; 49:1; 54:2, etc.
2. do not hide Yourself – BDB 761, KB 834, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 10:1; Lam. 3:56
3. give heed – BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 5:2; 10:17; 17:1; 61:1; 86:6; 142:6
4. answer me – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 4:1; 13:3; 17:6; 38:15; 60:5; 69:13,16,17; 86:1, etc.
5. I am restless – BDB 923, KB 1194, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
 - a. rare word used only four times, only here in Wisdom Literature; its meaning is unsure
 - b. it is also possible to take this word as “moan,” BDB 242, cf. v. 18; 42:12; 43:5; 77:4; JPSOA
 - c. NKJV tries to combine both options with “moan (BDB 242) noisily” (BDB 223)
6. I am surely distracted (lit. “be noisy”) – BDB 223, KB 242, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE, cf. LXX

The reasons for the psalmist’s cry for help is given in 55:4.

1. because of the voice of my enemy
2. because of the pressure of the wicked
3. for they bring down (NET Bible suggests “rain down,” cf. Ps. 140:10) upon me
4. for in anger they bear a grudge against me

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 55:4-8

⁴My heart is in anguish within me,
 And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
⁵Fear and trembling come upon me,
 And horror has overwhelmed me.
⁶I said, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove!
 I would fly away and be at rest.
⁷Behold, I would wander far away,

I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah.

**⁸I would hasten to my place of refuge
From the stormy wind *and* tempest.”**

55:4-8 This strophe describes how the psalmist feels (hyperbolic language) about the attacks of his adversaries.

1. my heart is in anguish within me – BDB 296, KB 297, *Qal* IMPERFECT, from root for pain in childbirth
2. the terrors of death have fallen upon me – BDB 956, KB 709, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 18:4-5; 116:3
3. fear and trembling come upon me – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT
4. horror has overwhelmed me – BDB 491, KB 487, *Piel* IMPERFECT with *waw*, cf. Isa. 21:4; Ezek. 7:18

In light of these fears he tells what he would like to do to escape them (figurative language).

1. O that I had (lit. “give”) wings like a dove – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. I would fly away – BDB 733, KB 800, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
3. I would be at rest – BDB 1014, KB 1496, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
4. I would wander far away – BDB 934, KB 1221, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
5. I would lodge in the wilderness – BDB 533, KB 529, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
6. I would hasten to my place of refuge – BDB 301, KB 300, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
 - a. raging wind – BDB 703 (only here)
 - b. tempest – BDB 704

55:4 “heart” See Special Topic at Psalm 4:7.

▣ **“the terrors of death”** Death is fearful to fallen mankind (cf. Ps. 18:4-5; 116:3), but God is in control of death and will bring it to an end (cf. Isa. 25:8; Hos. 13:14; 1 Cor. 15:50-57; 2 Tim. 1:10).

55:7 “Selah” See note at Psalm 3:2 and Intro. to Psalms, VII.

55:8 “place of refuge” The NOUN (BDB 812) occurs only here and Psalm 18:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 55:9-11

**⁹Confuse, O Lord, divide their tongues,
For I have seen violence and strife in the city.
¹⁰Day and night they go around her upon her walls,
And iniquity and mischief are in her midst.
¹¹Destruction is in her midst;
Oppression and deceit do not depart from her streets.**

55:9-11 This strophe continues the prayer request of vv. 1-2.

1. confuse (lit. “swallow up,” i.e., “destroy) – BDB 118, KB 134, *Piel* IMPERATIVE; this root could be used in the sense of “confuse,” cf. Ps. 107:27; Isa. 3:12; 9:16; 19:3; 28:7
2. divide their tongues – BDB 811, KB 928, *Piel* IMPERATIVE; this may be an allusion to Genesis 11:1-9.

Both #1 and #2 are prayers to disrupt/thwart the plans and schemes of the psalmist's enemies. Apparently they were causing trouble within the hometown of the psalmist (if David, then Jerusalem). They are political enemies!

1. I have seen violence in the city
2. I have seen strife in the city
3. day and night they go around her upon her walls
4. iniquity is in her midst
5. mischief is in her midst
6. oppression does not depart her streets (lit. plaza, BDB 932)
7. deceit does not depart her streets (lit. plaza/market place)

Numbers 3; 4; 5 may be an allusion to watchmen on the walls. In this case the watchmen are iniquity and mischief!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 55:12-15

- ¹²**For it is not an enemy who reproaches me,
Then I could bear *it*;
Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me,
Then I could hide myself from him.**
- ¹³**But it is you, a man my equal,
My companion and my familiar friend;**
- ¹⁴**We who had sweet fellowship together
Walked in the house of God in the throng.**
- ¹⁵**Let death come deceitfully upon them;
Let them go down alive to Sheol,
For evil is in their dwelling, in their midst.**

55:12-15 This strophe identified those causing the trouble as the psalmist's acquaintances.

1. It is not an enemy who reproaches me – I could bear it.
2. It is not one who hates me – I could hide from him.
3. It is not one who exalted himself against me (cf. Ps. 35:26; 38:16; Job 19:5) – I could hide from him.
4. It is you, a man
 - a. my equal
 - b. my companion
 - c. my familiar friend
5. We had sweet fellowship together.
6. We walked in the house of God together.

The psalmist reacts to their treachery.

1. Let death come deceitfully upon them – *Qere*, BDB 674, KB 728, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. Let them go down to Sheol – BDB 432, KB 434, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense; for *Sheol* see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6.
3. The reason for the psalmist's desire for their judgment:
 - a. evil in their dwelling place (BDB 158)
 - b. evil is in their midst

Since #3 does not parallel #2 well, there has been suggestion for emendation to “habitation.”

- a. “go in terror to their graves”
- b. “go in terror to the pit” (i.e., “storehouse” in the ground)

55:14

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, REB “the throng”

NJB “then they recoil in disorder”

The Hebrew word (BDB 921) is rare, used only three times in the OT.

1. the nations are in an uproar, cf. Ps. 2:1
2. a noisy, festival crowd in the temple, cf. Ps. 55:14
3. the tumult of those who do iniquity, cf. Ps. 64:2

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 55:16-21

¹⁶As for me, I shall call upon God,

And the Lord will save me.

¹⁷Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur,

And He will hear my voice.

¹⁸He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle *which is* against me,

For they are many *who strive* with me.

¹⁹God will hear and answer them—

Even the one who sits enthroned from of old—

Selah.

With whom there is no change,

And who do not fear God.

²⁰He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him;

He has violated his covenant.

²¹His speech was smoother than butter,

But his heart was war;

His words were softer than oil,

Yet they were drawn swords.

55:16-21 This strophe describes what God will do for/against

1. the psalmist
2. his betrayers

Verse 19 is both a description of God (i.e., who sits enthroned from of old, cf. Ps. 45:6; 93:2; Lam. 5:19) and the adversaries (i.e., who do not change). The confusion arises because this second phrase could apply to God (cf. Matt. 3:6), but here it refers to the unchanging evil hearts of the psalmist’s enemies.

Verses 16-19a give the psalmist’s prayers and God’s response.

1. I shall call upon God – BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. YHWH will save me – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
3. I will complain – BDB 967, KB 1319, *Qal* COHORTATIVE, cf. Ps. 64:1; 142:2; this root can mean “meditate,” cf. Ps. 119:15,23,27,148
4. I will murmur – BDB 242, KB 250, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
5. He will hear my voice – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT with *waw*
6. He will redeem my soul from the battle – BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* PERFECT, see Special Topic at Ps. 19:14
7. God will hear, v. 19a – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT

In verse 19b God will answer the adversaries (in the sense of, “give them what they deserve” – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERFECT; this root can mean “answer” or “afflict.” We reap what we sow! Verses 19c-21 describe their hearts and actions (collective “he,” cf. 55:18c).

1. there is no change (no VERB)
2. they do not fear God
3. they put forth their hands against those who were at peace
4. they violated the covenant
5. they have smooth speech but have war in their hearts
6. their soft words are like drawn swords

All the VERBS in #2-6 are PERFECTS, denoting a settled attitude of hate and rebellion.

55:17 “evening and morning and at noon” The day begins at evening for ancient Israelites because of Gen. 1:5,8,13,19,23,31. The “at noon” implies a later time when Judaism had three prayer times (cf. Dan. 6:10):

1. at the time of the morning sacrifice (about 9 a.m.)
2. noon
3. at the time of the evening sacrifice (about 3 p.m.)

It is surely possible that the phrase is an idiom for “continually.”

55:19 “Selah” See note at Psalm 3:2 and Intro. to Psalms, VII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 55:22-23

²²**Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you;
He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.**

²³**But You, O God, will bring them down to the pit of destruction;
Men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out half their days.
But I will trust in You.**

55:22-23 This final strophe is a contrast of what God will do for the faithful follower and against the faithless friend(s).

1. the faithful follower
 - a. the psalmist admonishes them to cast (BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) their burden (i.e., “lot,” BDB 396, only here and Ps. 37:5) upon YHWH (cf. 1 Pet. 5:7)
 - b. follow the psalmist’s example, “I will trust in You”
2. the faithless friend(s)
 - a. bring them down to the pit of destruction
 - b. men of bloodshed and deceit will live only half their allotted days

In light of the trust of the faithful, YHWH will

1. sustain them – BDB 465, KB 463, *Pilpel* IMPERFECT, cf. Ruth 4:15; Neh. 9:21
2. never allow them to be shaken – BDB 557, cf. Ps. 125:1; Pro. 10:30

Remember this Psalm describes the pain of betrayal and the many nights of prayer and discouragement at the actions of faithless friend(s). These last verses are not a promise of lack of problems but of YHWH’s presence and care. In the end all will be set straight. We live in a fallen world, unfair and ungodly world. Believers suffer and are treated badly but there is more to life than the immediate circumstances!

One last comment, it is not certain who is speaking in this strophe and, therefore, to whom they are speaking.

1. a priest or prophet hears the psalmist and responds to him
2. the psalmist is speaking to
 - a. himself
 - b. his readers
 - c. others hurt by friends

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who are the enemies? Why are their actions so painful to the psalmist?
2. Describe the psalmist's feelings. (cf. vv. 4-8)
3. How do verses 9-11 fit into this Psalm? What city is it referring to?
4. What is the problem in interpreting verse 19?
5. Put in your own words the kind of person verse 21 is talking about.
6. Who is speaking verses 22-23 and to whom?
7. List God's actions in verses 22-23.

PSALM 56

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Supplication for Deliverance, and Grateful Trust in God <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; according to Jonath elem rehokim. A Mikhtam of David when the Philistines seized him in Gath.	Prayer for Relief From Tormentors	A Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies	A Prayer of Trust in God	Trust in God
56:1-7	56:1-2 56:3-4 56:5-7	56:1-4 56:5-7	56:1-4 56:5-7	56:1-2 56:3-4 56:5-6 56:7-9a
56:8-13	56:8-11 56:12-13	56:8-11 56:12-13	56:8-11 56:12-13	56:9b-11 56:12-13

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 56:1-7

¹Be gracious to me, O God, for man has trampled upon me;

Fighting all day long he oppresses me.

²My foes have trampled upon me all day long,

For they are many who fight proudly against me.

³When I am afraid,

I will put my trust in You.

⁴In God, whose word I praise,

In God I have put my trust;

I shall not be afraid.

What can *mere* man do to me?

⁵All day long they distort my words;

All their thoughts are against me for evil.

⁶They attack, they lurk,

They watch my steps,

As they have waited *to take* my life.

⁷Because of wickedness, cast them forth,

In anger put down the peoples, O God!

56:1-7 “Be gracious” This IMPERATIVE (BDB 335, KB 334) begins many Psalms (cf. Ps. 4:1; 6:2; 51:1; 57:1 [twice]; 86:3; 123:3 [twice]) and it occurs in many others (cf. Ps. 9:13; 25:16; 26:11; 27:7; 30:10; 31:9; 41:4,10; 86:16; 119:29,58,132). It is often associated with

1. deliverance from enemies
2. forgiveness of sins

In this Psalm the prayer is because of reason #1. Notice how the psalmist describes his adversaries (vv. 1-2).

1. trampled upon (or “pant,” same consonants) him, v. 2 – BDB 983 II, KB 1375, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. v. 3; Ps. 57:3; Ezek. 36:3; Amos 8:4
2. fight proudly against him, v. 2 – BDB 535, KB 526, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
3. distort (lit. “vex” him) his words, v. 5 – BDB 780, KB 864, *Piel* IMPERFECT
4. their thoughts are evil against him, v. 5 – no VERB
5. attack (lit. “stir up strife”), v. 6 – BDB 158, KB 184, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 59:3; 140:3
6. lurk (lit. “hide”), v. 6 – MT has *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, *Qere Qal* IMPERFECT of BDB 860, KB 1049
7. watch his steps (lit., “heels”), v. 6 – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT (i.e., so as to find a time and place to attack), cf. Ps. 71:10
8. have waited to take his life, v. 6 – BDB 875, KB 1082, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 119:95

56:1 “all day long” Notice that this idiom for continual attack is used in verses 1, 2, and 5.

The psalmist looks forward to a day (cf. v. 3) when his enemies will be turned back, v. 9a. In the Bible “day” can refer to

1. temporal judgment
2. eschatological judgment

See Special Topic: That Day at Ps. 11:4b.



NASB Margin	“fighting man”
NRSV	“foes”
TEV	“enemies”
JPSOA	“adversary”
REB	“assailants”

The MT has the *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE of the VERB “to fight” (BDB 535, KB 526). This same group is called “men” (i.e., weak men, BDB 60).

56:2 “proudly” The MT has the NOUN “height” (BDB 928). It is translated in two ways.

1. the arrogance of the adversaries, NASB, NIV
2. part of the title for God
 - a. “Most High,” LXX, NKJV, NRSV, REB
 - b. “Lord Almighty,” TEV
 - c. “O Exalted One,” JPSOA

56:3 Verse 3 is a repeated theme; repeated in verses 4 and 11.

1. I am afraid – BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. I will put my trust in God – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERFECT, see note at Ps. 4:5
3. then I shall not be afraid, vv. 4,11, cf. Ps. 112:7-8; 118:6

56:4 “In God, whose word I praise” Notice this is repeated in verse 10 in a parallel way where *Elohim* and YHWH are connected.

The “word” (BDB 182) is a parallel to “Your vows” (BDB 623), v. 12. There are many terms used to characterize YHWH’s revelations. See Special Topic at Ps. 1:2.

▣ **“What can *mere* man (lit. ‘flesh’) do to me”** This same sentiment is expressed in Ps. 118:6 and quoted in Heb. 13:6. The concept is also seen in relation to spiritual forces in Rom. 8:31,35-39.

56:7 Because of the vicious and continuing attacks the psalmist asks God to act in judgment against his adversaries.

1. cast them forth (lit. “for crimes, will they escape,” NKJV) – BDB 812, KB 930, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
 - a. the VERB means “deliver,” cf. Ps. 17:13; 18:3, so here it must be a question or the translation must add a negative by emendation to “crimes” (REB, LXX)
 - b. it is also possibly to change “deliverance,” BDB 812, פלט, to “weigh out,” BDB 814, פלס
2. put down the peoples – BDB 432, KB 434, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 55:23. It is surprising that “the peoples,” which is usually used of national groups (NEB, REB), is used here. There are several theories.
 - a. this is a royal Psalm and refers to other nations
 - b. this is an Israelite/Judean living among foreigners
 - c. just a way of referring to his enemies who act like non-covenant peoples

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 56:8-13

⁸You have taken account of my wanderings;

Put my tears in Your bottle.

Are *they* not in Your book?

⁹Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call;

This I know, that God is for me.

¹⁰In God, *whose* word I praise,

In the Lord, *whose* word I praise,

¹¹In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid.

What can man do to me?

¹²Your vows are *binding* upon me, O God;

I will render thank offerings to You.

¹³For You have delivered my soul from death,

Indeed my feet from stumbling,

So that I may walk before God

In the light of the living.

56:8-13 This strophe deals with the psalmist's faith conviction that God was with him and for him. One day his adversaries will face the consequences of their actions (v. 9).

56:8 God knows what the psalmist is going through (cf. Exod. 3:7). He expresses this faith worldview (i.e., based on the promises of Scripture) in

1. the VERB, "taken account" (i.e., God knows) – BDB 707, KB 765, *Qal* PERFECT
2. the VERB, "put my tears in a bottle" – BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (i.e., prayer request); a metaphor for remembering the suffering and evil the psalmist experienced at the hands/words of his enemies
3. Your book – the word "book" (BDB 707) is very similar to the VERB "take into account" (BDB 707). "Book" is a biblical idiom of God's memory. See Special Topic: The Two Books of God at Ps. 9:5.

▣ **"bottle"** The word (BDB 609) means an animal skin (sheep) sewed into a container for liquid (cf. Jos. 9:4,13; Jdgs. 4:19; 1 Sam.16:20; Ps. 119:83).



NASB, NKJV,

JPSOA "wanderings"

NRSV "tossings"

TEV "how troubled"

NJB "sorrows"

REB "grief"

The Hebrew NOUN (BDB 627 I) is found only here. It is the same consonants as "move to and from" "wander," "flutter," "show grief" (BDB 626). The usage of "wander" can be seen in Ps. 36:11; 59:11; 2 Kgs. 21:8. There is a sound play in Hebrew between "wander" and "bottle."

56:9 "when I call" It is possible the "call" is the statement of faith.

1. v. 9b
2. v. 3a
3. v. 4a-b

Whichever it refers to, it denotes an act of volitional faith. There is a theological tension between the sovereignty of God and the freewill of man. Both are necessary for covenant. See Special Topics at Ps. 25:12 and Ps. 25:10.

▣ **"This I know, that God is for me"** This is a play on the meanings of the Hebrew word "know" (BDB 393). See Special Topic: Know at Ps. 1:6.

56:12 “vows” This may be another way of referring to God’s promises (cf. v. 10b) or it may refer to promises the psalmist made to God. Once they are fulfilled then

1. an offering is required (cf. v. 12b)
2. verbal praise is required

In context it may refer to the psalmist’s fear of death by his adversaries and thereby he asked God to save him. In this request he made some kind of a vow. God did save him, now he must fulfill his vow.

56:13 The psalmist mentions several things God has done for him.

1. delivered his soul from death – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* PERFECT; this must relate to verse 6
2. kept his feet from stumbling and, thereby allowing him to walk before God; godly living was described as a clear, level, unobstructed path/road (see note at Ps. 1:1). They “watched his steps” in v. 6, but now God helps him walk.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. The heart of the Psalm is a repeated refrain, what is it?
2. Explain the idiom of “book.” How many “books” does the Bible mention that God keeps?
3. What does “in that day” imply?
4. Explain verse 10 in your own words.
5. What does it mean to “walk before God”?

PSALM 57

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Rescue From Persecutors <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; <i>set</i> to Al-tashheth. A Mikhtam of David when he fled from Saul, in the cave.	Prayer for Safety From Enemies	A Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies	A Prayer for Help	Among Ferocious Enemies
57:1-3	57:1 57:2-3	57:1-3	57:1 57:2-3	57:1 57:2-3
57:4-6	57:4-5 57:6	57:4 57:5 57:6-10	57:4 57:5 57:6	57:4 57:5-6
57:7-11	57:7-8 57:9-10 57:11	57:11	57:7-11	57:7 57:8 57:9-11

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is characterized by the use of double (or triple) words.
 1. be gracious to me, v. 1
 2. take refuge, v. 1

3. my heart is steadfast, v. 7
 4. awake, v. 8
- B. In verses 6 and 7 there are several VERBS that start with the Hebrew letter *Kaph*.
1. prepared – BDB 465, KB 464
 2. bowed down – BDB 496, KB 493
 3. dug – BDB 500, KB 496
 4. fall – BDB 656, KB 709
 5. steadfast – BDB 465, KB 464 (twice)
- Also NOUNS
1. glory, v. 5 – BDB 458
 2. my soul/liver, v. 8 – BDB 458 (NASB has “glory,” BDB 458)
 3. lyre, v. 8 – BDB 490
- C. Verse 6 is a typical “reversal” motif, so common in the OT. Enemies plan evil but are caught in their own schemes.
- D. Two key theological terms are repeated.
1. lovingkindness (*hesed*) – BDB 338, cf. vv. 3 (personified), 10 (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7)
 2. faithfulness/truth (*emet*) – BDB 54, vv. 3 (personified), 10 (see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1)
- E. This Psalm mentions “the nations.” See Special Topic: YHWH’s Universal Redemptive Plan at Intro. to Psalm 2.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 57:1-3

¹Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me,
 For my soul takes refuge in You;
 And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge
 Until destruction passes by.
²I will cry to God Most High,
 To God who accomplishes *all things* for me.
³He will send from heaven and save me;
 He reproaches him who tramples upon me. Selah.
 God will send forth His lovingkindness and His truth.

57:1 This Psalm is characterized by the double use of words (i.e., Hebrew parallelism, see Introductory Article on Hebrew Poetry). See Contextual Insights, A.

▣ **“Be gracious to me”** Verse 1 (twice). See note at Ps. 56:1.

▣ **“refuge”** The VERB (BDB 340, KB 334) is a recurrent theme in the Psalms. See note at Ps. 5:11. Here there is a play between

1. the PERFECT denoting completed action and a resulting state
2. the IMPERFECT denoting ongoing continuing action

▣ **“the shadow of Your wings”** This is one of several feminine metaphors to describe God.

1. as a mother bird – Gen. 1:2; Exod. 19:4; Deut. 32:11; 33:12; Isa. 31:5
2. nursing mother – Isa. 49:15; 66:13; Hos. 11:4 (emendation)

See Special Topic: Shadow as Metaphor for Protection and Care at Ps. 5:11-12.

▣ **“until destruction passes by”** This continues the metaphor of God as a mother bird. Note “destruction” (i.e., destructive winds or storm, BDB 217, cf. similar terms in Ps. 55:8) is personified (cf. Isa. 26:20).

57:2 “God Most High” This is the name *Elohim* (BDB 43, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1) combined with *Elyon* (BDB 751 I). See note at 7:17.

▣ **“God”** This is *El* (BDB 42), the general name for Deity in the ANE.

▣ **“who accomplishes *all things* for me”** What an inclusive faith assertion (cf. Ps. 138:8). Experience tells us that “all” must be defined and limited. But this faithful follower believes (cf. Phil. 1:6).

In this context God’s actions are noted in verse 3.

1. send from heaven – who or what is not specified
2. save me – from vicious enemies (cf. 57:4,6)
3. reproach those who trample (cf. Ps. 56:2) – BDB 357 I; it means “rebuke” or “put to shame” those who say sharp things (see the enemies described as wild lions with sharp teeth, v. 4)
4. send forth His personified lovingkindness and truth/faithfulness, cf. Ps. 89:14 and also Ps. 43:3, where “light” and “truth” are personified as YHWH’s servants

57:3 “sent from heaven” The term “heaven” has two distinct usages.

1. the atmosphere above the earth (cf. 57:5)
2. the place YHWH dwells (cf. 57:5)

See Special Topic: Heaven at Ps. 8:1. In OT thought God was transcendent. The Holy One of Israel was separated from sinful creations after Genesis 3. He dwelt with Israel in the Holy of Holies, between the wings of the *Cherubim*, above the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant (which symbolized the place of atonement, cf. Leviticus 16). There is a purposeful tension between YHWH’s transcendent holiness and immanence with Israel.

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Ps. 3:2 and Intro. to Psalms, VII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 57:4-6

⁴**My soul is among lions;**

I must lie among those who breathe forth fire,

Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows

And their tongue a sharp sword.

⁵**Be exalted above the heavens, O God;**

Let Your glory *be* above all the earth.

⁶**They have prepared a net for my steps;**

My soul is bowed down;

They dug a pit before me;

They *themselves* have fallen into the midst of it.

Selah.

57:4-6 These verses characterize the psalmist's enemies and his God who supports him (cf. v. 2).

1. the enemies
 - a. like lions
 - b. breathe fire (or, KB 521 II, to devour, found only here)
 - c. teeth/words are spears and arrows
 - d. prepared a trap to catch and kill him but will fall into it themselves (cf. Pro. 26:27)
2. God (cf. vv. 5,11)
 - a. be exalted – BDB 926, KB 1202, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, here “heavens” refers to the atmosphere above the earth (note parallelism)
 - b. Your glory be above the earth
3. the psalmist
 - a. I must lie among. . . – BDB 1011, KB 1486, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
 - b. my soul is bowed down – BDB 496, KB 493, *Qal* PERFECT

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 57:7-11

⁷My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;

I will sing, yes, I will sing praises!

⁸Awake, my glory!

Awake, harp and lyre!

I will awaken the dawn.

⁹I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the peoples;

I will sing praises to You among the nations.

¹⁰For Your lovingkindness is great to the heavens

And Your truth to the clouds.

¹¹Be exalted above the heavens, O God;

Let Your glory be above all the earth.

57:7-11 This strophe is almost exactly like Ps. 108:2-6. It may have been a liturgical refrain.

57:7-9 This strophe expresses the psalmist's faith and confidence in YHWH's actions on his behalf.

1. my heart is steadfast, v. 7 (twice) – BDB 465, KB 464, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE
2. I will sing, v. 7 – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
3. I will sing praises, v. 7 – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
4. awake my glory (or “my soul,” lit. “liver,” both BDB 458), v. 8 – BDB 734, KB 802, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. awake my harp and lyre (i.e., instruments for the psalmist to praise God with), v. 8 – BDB same VERB as #4
6. I will awaken the dawn, v. 8 – BDB 734, KB 802, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
7. I will give thanks, v. 9 – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
8. I will sing praises, v. 9 – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

57:9 Notice the parallelism between “the peoples” (BDB 766 I) and “the nations” (BDB 115 and BDB 52, i.e., not covenant peoples). There is a recurrent emphasis in the Psalms on the universal aspect of Israel's God (cf. Ps. 9:11b; 18:47,49; 105:1; 145:12-13). The implication of monotheism (see Special Topic at Ps. 2:7) is that there is only one true God who created all humans in His image for fellowship (see Special Topic: YHWH's Universal Redemptive Plan at Psalm 2 Introduction).

57:10 This verse repeats the personified servants of God (i.e., *hesed* and *emet*) from verse 3. They are both said to be “above” the heavens and clouds (i.e., atmosphere of this planet), which denotes

1. their greatness
2. their origin in God

57:11 This repeats verse 5. It functions as a way to denote the greatness of God (i.e., His transcendence above His creation).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Explain the metaphor of “the shadow of Your wings,” v. 1.
2. List the three names for Deity in verse 2 and explain their implication.
3. Define “heaven.”
4. Why are aspects of God’s character personified?
5. Explain verse 9 in light of monotheism.

PSALM 58

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for the Punishment of the Wicked <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; <i>set</i> to Al-tashheth. A Mikhtam of David.	The Just Judgment of the Wicked	Curse Upon Enemies	A Prayer for God to Punish the Wicked	The Judge of Earthly Judges
58:1-5	58:1-2 58:3-5	58:1-2 58:3-5	58:1-2 58:3-5	58:1-2 58:3-5
58:6-9	58:6-8 58:9-11	58:6-9	58:6-9	58:6-8 58:9-11
58:10-11		58:10-11	58:10-11	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is addressing unrighteous judges and their unfair, self-seeking motives.
- B. These leaders (i.e., rams) are described as being sinful from birth (cf. Ps. 51:5, i.e., eastern hyperbole).
- C. God's judgment rightly falls on these religious pretenders with graphic violence.
- D. The righteous rejoice that God acts against evil and corruption. He will reign in righteousness over a new world one day!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 58:1-5

¹Do you indeed speak righteousness, O gods?
Do you judge uprightly, O sons of men?
²No, in heart you work unrighteousness;
On earth you weigh out the violence of your hands.
³The wicked are estranged from the womb;
These who speak lies go astray from birth.
⁴They have venom like the venom of a serpent;
Like a deaf cobra that stops up its ear,
⁵So that it does not hear the voice of charmers,
Or a skillful caster of spells.

58:1 There is some question about how to translate the first line. It is obviously in a synonymous parallel relationship with line two.

NASB	“O gods”
NKJV	“you silent ones”
NRSV	“you gods”
NJB	“divine as you are”
JPSOA	“O mighty ones”
REB	“you rulers”

The UBS Text Project (p. 268) gives the term “silently” a “B” rating (some doubt) and suggests a translation like, “Is it really a silence of righteousness you speak?”, i.e., do you really speak in order to conceal by silence the righteousness?

The MT has שָׁמֵם, which could relate to BDB 48 (silence) or BDB 18 III (mighty lords). Whichever it is, it must parallel “the sons of men” in line two. So it cannot refer to “gods,” but civic leaders (i.e., judges, cf. Psalm 82; Exod. 22:8-9; Deut. 1:17; 2 Chr. 19:6) from the root “ram” (BDB 17, cf. Exod. 15:15; 2 Kgs. 24:15; Ezek. 17:13; 31:11; 32:21; 34:17).

The LXX, Peshitta, and Vulgate change the vowels to form an ADVERSATIVE, “Do you then truly speak righteousness?”

58:2-5 These verses reveal the true nature of these leaders.

1. work unrighteousness in your heart, v. 2
2. weigh out the violence of your own hands
3. estranged from the womb (see full note at Ps. 51:5; this is eastern hyperbolic imagery, not theology)
4. speak lies all their lives
5. have the venom of a serpent
6. refuse to be charmed (lit. “whisper”) – BDB 538, KB 527, here used of snake charmers. The people of the ANE thought the sound of a flute (or voice) quieted a snake but today we know it was the rhythmic movement of the flute itself, not the sound).

The theological thrust is that they wilfully refuse to listen to God or those they adjudicate.

I do not think “charmed” should be equaled with sorcery here but cultural snake acts for public entertainment.

58:2 “on earth” In this context this refers to the land of Israel, not the earth. See Special Topic: Land, Country, Earth at Ps. 1:2. Remember only context can determine word meaning!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 58:6-9

**⁶O God, shatter their teeth in their mouth;
Break out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD.
⁷Let them flow away like water that runs off;
When he aims his arrows, let them be as headless shafts.
⁸Let them be as a snail which melts away as it goes along,
Like the miscarriages of a woman which never see the sun.
⁹Before your pots can feel *the fire of thorns*
He will sweep them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike.**

58:6-9 This strophe is a prayer for God’s (both *Elohim* and YHWH used) judgment on these judges in graphic, descriptive phrases.

1. shatter their teeth – BDB 248, KB 256, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (“teeth” and “fangs”; parallel in Joel 1:6)
2. break out “lit. “tear out”) the fangs (BDB 1069) of the young lions – BDB 683, KB 736, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (#1 and #2 are parallel; may judgment occur for the very place where they sin [i.e., in their words/verdicts])
3. let them flow away like runoff water – BDB 549, KB 541, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. let their arrows be ineffective (Hebrew idiom uncertain, but seems to refer to their unjust verdicts and accusations)
5. let them be like a snail (BDB 117, only here in the OT) which melts away (BDB 588, this form found only here in the OT, “dissolve” is BDB 587) as it goes along – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT; the assumed “to be” VERB is used in a JUSSIVE sense
6. let them be like the miscarriages of a woman who never sees the sun – BDB 302, KB 301, *Qal* PERFECT (though not IMPERFECT the immediate concept demands it is used in a JUSSIVE sense)

The problem in understanding exactly what is being said in verse 8 is that the parallelism between “snail” and “a miscarriage” is faulty, but how is uncertain. The term in the second line is far more certain than “snail” and “melt away.” The NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 30, suggests “snail” be understood as “a miscarriage.”

7. this is a difficult verse in Hebrew (AB does not even attempt to translate it). There have been several suggestions. The basic point is that the needed heat for the cooking pot is blown away before it can heat the food (i.e., even fast-starting kindling).

Just like the previous lines of poetry, these IMPERFECTS seem to be used in a JUSSIVE sense to connect to the prayer request IMPERATIVES of verse 6.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 58:10-11

**¹⁰The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance;
He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.
¹¹And men will say, “Surely there is a reward for the righteous;
Surely there is a God who judges on earth!”**

58:10-11 It has always bothered modern interpreters that the Psalms call for such violent judgment against the writer’s enemies. One way to view this is that these enemies are attacking God as they unfairly attack

His people. So the already stated judgment (i.e., Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30) rightfully falls on them. Therefore, it is not a call for vengeance or vindictiveness but justice and the fulfillment of God's words, so that all will see there is a Righteous God in Israel (cf. Deut. 32:34-43; Ps. 79:10; 94:1-11; 149:7-9).

Verse 10b is an ANE hyperbole for military victory (cf. Ps. 68:23).

58:11 I agree with the NET Bible that the *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, MASCULINE, PLURAL is a PLURAL OF MAJESTY, referring to YHWH's righteous judgment.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who does this Psalm address?
2. Does verse 3 teach the doctrine of original sin?
3. What spiritual truth is verse 4b communicating?
4. Explain the lack of synonymous parallelism in verse 8.
5. Do verses 10-11 teach a spirit of revenge? Why or why not?

PSALM 59

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for the Deliverance From Enemies <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; <i>set</i> to Al-tashheth, when Saul sent <i>men</i> , and they watched the house in order to kill him.	The Assured Judgment of the Wicked	Prayer for Deliverance From Enemies	A Prayer for Safety	Against the Wicked
59:1-8	59:1-2 59:3-4 59:5 59:6-7 59:8-9	59:1-2 59:3-4 59:5 59:6-7 59:8-10	59:1-2 59:3-4 59:5 59:6-7 59:8-10	59:1-2 59:3-4b 59:4c-5 59:6 59:7 59:8-9a 59:9b-10
59:9-15	59:10 59:11-13 59:14-15	59:11-13	59:11-15	59:11 59:12 59:13 59:14 59:15
59:16-17	59:16-17	59:16-17	59:16-17	59:16 59:17

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Again the question of who are the “enemies” recurs. In this Psalm it seems to refer to Gentile invaders (cf. vv. 5,6,7,8,11,13,14,15). Verse 8 reminds one of Psalm 2:4.
- B. The psalmist states clearly that he is attacked, but not because of anything he has done (cf. vv. 3c, 4a). The attack seems to come because he/they are YHWH’s people.
- C. Notice the titles for the Covenant Deity.
 - 1. O my God, v. 1 – probably *Elohim*, like verse 8 with final letter in the next word
 - 2. O YHWH, vv. 3,5,8 – BDB 217
 - 3. God of hosts (*Elohim Sabaoth*), v. 5 – BDB 43 and 838; military connotations
 - 4. God of Israel, v. 5 – BDB 43 CONSTRUCT BDB 975
 - 5. O my strength – BDB 738
 - 6. *God* is my fortress/stronghold, v. 9 – BDB 43 and BDB 960 I
 - 7. *God is* my lovingkindness, vv. 10,17 – BDB 43 and BDB 338
 - 8. O LORD, our shield or *Adon is* our shield, v. 11 – BDB 10 and BDB 171
 - 9. God (*Elohim*), v. 13 – BDB 43 (*Elohim*)
 - 10. O my strength, v. 16 – BDB 738
 - 11. O God my fortress, v. 17 – same as #5

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 59:1-8

- ¹Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
Set me *securely* on high away from those who rise up against me.
- ²Deliver me from those who do iniquity
And save me from men of bloodshed.
- ³For behold, they have set an ambush for my life;
Fierce men launch an attack against me,
Not for my transgression nor for my sin, O LORD,
- ⁴For no guilt of *mine*, they run and set themselves against me.
Arouse Yourself to help me, and see!
- ⁵You, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,
Awake to punish all the nations;
Do not be gracious to any *who are* treacherous in iniquity. Selah.
- ⁶They return at evening, they howl like a dog,
And go around the city.
- ⁷Behold, they belch forth with their mouth;
Swords are in their lips,
For, *they say*, “Who hears?”

**⁸But You, O LORD, laugh at them;
You scoff at all the nations.**

59:1-2 Notice the Psalm starts with three IMPERATIVES (prayer requests for deliverance from enemies).

1. deliver, v. 1 – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. deliver, v. 2 – same as #1
3. save – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 28:9; 31:16; 71:2; 86:2,16

Both are used in Ps. 7:1; 22:20-21; 31:2-3,15-16; 33:16-17; 34:17-18, etc. It is a recurrent prayer for help!
Notice how the enemies are characterized.

1. those who rise up against me
2. those who do iniquity
3. men of bloodshed

The enemies in this Psalm seem to be foreign invaders.

1. punish all the nations, v. 5
2. go around the city (i.e., siege), v. 6
3. belch forth. . . swords, v. 7
4. YHWH scoffs at all the nations, v. 8
5. do not slay them lest my people forget, v. 11
6. God rules in Jacob, to the ends of the earth, v. 13
7. go around the city, v. 14 (see #2)
8. v. 15 is imagery of a siege

59:3-4a In these verses the SINGULAR “me” refers to a/the leader of Israel. An attack on him is an attack on the covenant people. One wonders if the foreign invaders had inside help.

Notice the author defends his own righteousness by asserting that he is attacked for no reason (cf. vv. 3c, 4b). The enemies attack because of how he is related to the God of Israel (cf. Psalm 2).

59:4b-5 These two verses are linked by the three IMPERATIVES calling on Deity to act in deliverance.

1. arouse Yourself, v. 3b – BDB 734, KB 802, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 7:6; 35:23; 44:23; 57:8 (thrice); 73:20; 80:2; 108:2
2. see, v. 4b – BDB 906, KB1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 9:13; 25:18,19; 80:14; 84:9; 119:153,159; 139:24
3. awake, v. 5 – BDB 884, KB 1098, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf Ps. 35:23; 44:23

▣ **“help me”** This is literally “meet me.” This personal aspect is repeated in verse 10a.

▣ **“O LORD, God of hosts”** See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Ps. 1:1.

▣ **“Do not be gracious”** This negated VERB (BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) is used often in Psalms (cf. Ps. 4:1; 6:2; 9:13; 25:16; 26:11; 27:7; 30:10; 41:4,10; 51:1; 56:1; 57:1, etc.). here the psalmist asks God not to show mercy to his enemies because they are treacherous in iniquity (cf. Ps. 109:14; Isa. 2:9; Jer. 18:23).

59:6-7 There are several modern English translations that have verses 6-7 as a strophe and begin a new strophe at verses 8-10. It is hard to know how to divide this Psalm into its logical divisions.

Verses 6-7 describe the enemies as

1. howling dogs

2. dogs that go around
 - a. a siege metaphor (cf. 59:14-15)
 - b. a metaphor for their constant search for food (59:15)
3. belch. . . swords, v. 7
4. no fear of God (i.e., they say, “Who hears?” cf. Job 22:13; Ps. 10:4,11,13; 64:5; 73:11; 94:7; Isa. 29:15; Ezek. 8:12). They are either
 - a. Israelite practical atheists
 - b. pagans/idolaters

59:8 Verse 8 reminds me of

1. Psalm 2:4
2. Psalm 37:13

This verse seems to demand the enemies are Gentile, pagan invaders (cf. vv. 5,6,7,8,11,13,14,15).

The VERBS in v. 8 are both *Qal* IMPERFECTS that speak of ongoing action (i.e., YHWH laughs. . . scoffs at the nations in their disbelief and arrogant assaults on His people).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 59:9-15

- ⁹***Because of his strength I will watch for You,
For God is my stronghold.***
- ¹⁰***My God in His lovingkindness will meet me;
God will let me look triumphantly upon my foes.***
- ¹¹***Do not slay them, or my people will forget;
Scatter them by Your power, and bring them down,
O Lord, our shield.***
- ¹²***On account of the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips,
Let them even be caught in their pride,
And on account of curses and lies which they utter.***
- ¹³***Destroy them in wrath, destroy them that they may be no more;
That men may know that God rules in Jacob
To the ends of the earth.*** **Selah.**
- ¹⁴***They return at evening, they howl like a dog,
And go around the city.***
- ¹⁵***They wander about for food
And growl if they are not satisfied.***

59:9-13 There are several titles of Deity. See Contextual Insights, C.

59:9

NASB	“his strength”
NKJV	“his Strength”
NRSV, NJB, JPSOA	“my strength”
TEV	“your strength”

The UBS Text Project (p. 271) gives “my strength” a “D” rating (highly doubtful). This is probably based on the same words in verse 18. It is a title for Deity.



NASB	<i>“Because of his strength”</i>
NKJV	“O You his Strength”
NRSV, JPSOA	“O my strength”
NJB, REB	“My strength”
LXX	“O my might”

I think this is another title for Deity (cf. Ps. 21:1; 28:7,8; 59:17; 81:1; 118:14). It parallels “God is my stronghold.”

▣ **“I will watch for You”** This VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581) is a *Qal* COHORTATIVE, cf. Ps. 130:6. The psalmist longed to see God and be with him!

59:10 This is another title for God (i.e., “God of my lovingkindness”), NKJV has “My merciful God” and JPSOA has “My faithful God.”

▣ **“will let me look *triumphantly* upon my foes”** This is another cultural idiom of victory (cf. Ps. 23:5; 54:7; 91:8; 92:11; 112:8; 118:7).

59:11 This verse is surprising to me. It reminds me of how YHWH dwelt with the Hebrew tribes after the conquest of the walled cities by Joshua. Each tribe had to militarily conquer its own territory from the Canaanite tribes. God did not do it for them. They had to act in faith. He left some opposition so that they could grow in faith, in Him, and in themselves.

The VERB forms are

1. do not slay, v. 11 – BDB 246, KB 255, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. scatter them, v. 11 – BDB 631, KB 681, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. bring them down, v. 11 – BDB 432, KB 434, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
- 4-5. destroy them, v. 13 – BDB 477, KB 476, *Piel* IMPERATIVE (twice)
6. that they may be no more – BDB 34 II (no VERB)

These commands must be modified by verse 11a. It is possible that there is confusion between “no” (לֹא – BDB 39) and “*El*” (אל, general name for Deity in the ANE – BDB 42 II). This is the suggestion of AB (p. 71).

▣ **“lest my people forget”** The VERB (BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* IMPERFECT) also occurs in Deut. 8:11-20, where YHWH admonishes His people not to think that their prosperity or victory is because of themselves!

▣ **“our shield”** This imagery goes back to YHWH’s initial encounters with Abraham and the promises He made him and his descendants (cf. Gen. 15:1; Deut. 33:29). It is recurrent in the Psalms (cf. Ps. 3:3; 5:12; 28:7; 115:9-11). It denotes God as protector!

59:12 “Let them even be caught in their pride” – BDB 539, KB 530, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. Human pride and arrogance is

1. the essence of the Fall
2. abhorrent to YHWH

He will not tolerate it (cf. Isa. 2:11-12; 5:15; 10:33; Zeph. 3:11). As a biblical example of human pride, note the Special Topic: Boasting at Ps. 20:7.

59:13 “That *men* may know that God rules in Jacob,

To the ends of the earth” This universal element is crucial in understanding what God is doing in our world (cf. Ps. 2:8; 58:11; 67:7; 72:8,17; 96:13; 98:9; Isa. 45:22; 49:6; 52:10; Jer. 16:19; Micah 5:4; Matt. 25:32). See Special Topic: YHWH’ Eternal Redemptive Plan at Intro. to Psalm 2.

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Ps. 3:2 and Intro. to Psalms, VII.

59:14-15 These link back to verses 6-7. Verse 6 and verse 14 are duplicate refrains. Verses 7 and 15 are both descriptive phrases about the enemies. They are vicious predators!

59:14

NASB, NRSV,

JPSOA “growl”

NKJV “howl”

This root (BDB 534 II) can mean

1. spend the night – BDB 533 I (this is the MT pointing, cf. Ps. 55:7)
2. growl – BDB 534 II

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 59:16-17

¹⁶But as for me, I shall sing of Your strength;

Yes, I shall joyfully sing of Your lovingkindness in the morning,

For You have been my stronghold

And a refuge in the day of my distress.

¹⁷O my strength, I will sing praises to You;

For God is my stronghold, the God who shows me lovingkindness.

59:16-17 The psalmist contrasts (i.e., “but as for me”) his lifestyle and motives with them.

1. I shall sing of Your strength, v. 16
2. I shall joyfully sing of Your lovingkindness, v. 16
3. I will sing praises to You, v. 17

The reason for these songs of praise is YHWH

1. has been his stronghold (BDB 960 I)
2. is his refuge (BDB 631) in the day of distress, cf. Jer. 16:19
3. is his stronghold (BDB 960 I), cf. Ps. 9:9; 59:9; 62:2,6
4. has shown him lovingkindness (BDB 338)

Several of the key theological terms describing YHWH are repeated in this close.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who are the enemies? Why does it seem there are two groups?
2. Is the psalmist claiming sinlessness in verses 3c, 4a?
3. What is the imagery behind “arouse” and “awake”?
4. List the universal elements in this Psalm. What do they imply?
5. Verse 11 seems confusing. Why?

PSALM 60

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Lament Over Defeat in Battle, and Prayer for Help <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; according to Sushan Eduth. Mikhtam of David, to teach; when he struggled with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and Joab returned, and smote twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt.	Urgent Prayer for the Restored Favor of God	Prayer for Deliverance From National Enemies	A Prayer for Deliverance	National Prayer After Defeat
60:1-5	60:1-3	60:1-3	60:1-5	60:1-2 60:3-4
	60:4-5	60:4-5		60:5
60:6-8	60:6-8	60:6-8	60:6-8	60:6 60:7 60:8
60:9-12	60:9-12	60:9-12	60:9-12	60:9-10 60:11-12

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 60:1-5

¹O God, You have rejected us. You have broken us;

You have been angry; O, restore us.

²You have made the land quake, You have split it open;

Heal its breaches, for it totters.

³You have made Your people experience hardship;

You have given us wine to drink that makes us stagger.

⁴You have given a banner to those who fear You,

That it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.

⁵That Your beloved may be delivered,

Save with Your right hand, and answer us!

60:1-3 This strophe describes how the psalmist perceives his/Israel's relationship with YHWH.

1. He has rejected us – BDB 276, KB 276, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 44:9,23; 74:1; 77:7; 108:11
2. He has broken us – BDB 829, KB 971, *Qal* PERFECT, possibly related to a breach in a defensive wall
3. He has been angry – BDB 60, KB 72, *Qal* PERFECT
4. He has made their land quake – BDB 950, KB 1271, *Hiphil* PERFECT
5. He has made the land split open – BDB 822, KB 954, *Qal* PERFECT, rare word, only here and a related form in Jer. 22:14, where it is translated “cut out”
6. He made His people experience hardship – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Hiphil* PERFECT
7. He gave them wine to drink (i.e., cause drunkenness and staggering) – BDB 1052, KB 1639, *Hiphil* PERFECT, the cup might be for the nations (cf. Jer. 25:16-26), is now given to the covenant people with the same effect (cf. Isa. 51:17,22)

Notice that all the VERBS are PERFECTS, which denotes a settled condition. In light of this the psalmist prays that God will

1. restore us – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Polel* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 80:3,7,19; 85:4; 126:1; Lam. 5:21
2. heal (i.e., “restore,” NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1163) the land – BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 2 Chr. 7:14; this may refer to the breach in the wall of v. 1b

It must be stated that all of these prayer requests for God's help, protection, deliverance are based on His people's faith and lifestyle (cf. 2 Chr. 6:37-39). All God's promises (except for the ones connected to Messiah and His ministry) are conditional (see Special Topic at Ps. 25:10).

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S COVENANT REQUIREMENTS OF ISRAEL

YHWH's requirements (BDB 981, KB 1371, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) are stated clearly in a series of *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS:

1. “to fear the LORD” – BDB 431, KB 432, cf. Deut. 4:29; 10:20
2. “to walk in all His ways” – BDB 229, KB 246, cf. Deut. 4:29
3. “to love Him” – BDB 12, KB 17, cf. Deut. 6:5; 10:15; see full note at 5:10

4. “to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” – BDB 712, KB 773, cf. Deut. 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; 30:2,6,10
5. “to keep the LORD’s commandments and His statutes” – BDB 1036, KB 1581

This passage is similar to Micah 6:6-8. Both speak of a faith that affects daily life!

60:1 The rejection by God (cf. vv. 1,10) of His people (cf. vv. 3,5) is shocking! We must remember that God had a purpose for Israel. She was to be a mechanism for the worldwide revelation of God’s character and purposes (see Special Topic at Psalm 2 Intro., cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). This demanded faithful covenant obedience (cf. 1 Chr. 28:9). Because of the Fall of Genesis 3 they could not; judgment was the only option (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30).

The phrase “in His holiness” in verse 6 is a powerful reminder of the character of God that He wants His people to emulate and model for the nations (see Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God at Ps. 9:10b).

A new approach was necessary. This new approach is called “the new covenant” (cf. Jer. 31:31-34), which the NT clarifies as the gospel of Jesus Christ.

60:4-5 To me this should be a separate strophe (cf. NKJV, NRSV). The SUBJECT changes from verses 1-3. This strophe describes YHWH’s actions on behalf of Israel.

1. He has given those who revere Him a banner (BDB 651, i.e., a visible sign or way to communicate, cf. Exod. 17:15; Isa. 5:26; 11:12; 13:2; Ps. 20:5); this could be a negative (i.e., flee) or positive (i.e., rally to) expression.
2. He wants it displayed to communicate Himself (i.e., the truth; the Hebrew consonants עוֹבֶד can mean “of the bow” or “truth,” BDB 905; UBS Text Project support “of the bow” with a “B” rating (some doubt); the NRSV, NJB, NET Bible; REB support this choice but NKJV and JPSOA have “truth.” The word for “bow” has an added vowel only here.

The point seems to be that YHWH is providing some support to Israel by His presence with them in battle.

60:4 “Selah” See note at Ps. 3:2 and Intro. to Psalms, VII.

60:5 “Your beloved” This ADJECTIVE (BDB 391) is used of the lover in Song of Songs (cf. Song of Songs 1:2,4; 4:10; 5:1; 7:13). Here it is used of YHWH’s covenant people (cf. Jer. 12:7). It is a strong, passionate description.

▣ This verse has two prayer requests based on 60:4.

1. save us (MT; *Qere* “me”) – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, i.e., by Your actions, cf. Ps. 3:7; 20:9
2. answer us (MT, *Qere* “me”) – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

The UBS Text Project (p. 277) gives the MT’s “us” a “C” rating (considerable doubt). The PLURAL is in verses 10 and 11.

▣ **“Your right hand”** This is a Hebrew idiom of power and effective action (cf. Exod. 15:6; Ps. 17:7; 44:3; 98:1; 108:6; 138:7; 139:10, see Special Topic at Ps. 7:3-4).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 60:6-8

⁶God has spoken in His holiness:

“I will exult, I will portion out Shechem and measure out the valley of Succoth.

⁷“Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine;

Ephraim also is the helmet of My head;

Judah is My scepter.

⁸“Moab is My washbowl;

Over Edom I shall throw My shoe;

Shout loud, O Philistia, because of Me!”

60:6-8 This strophe extols YHWH’s sovereignty (or “holiness,” BDB 871) over the nations (cf. Deut. 32:8). These verses are repeated in Ps. 108:7-14, which means it may have been part of liturgy. It may be connected to Exod. 15:14-17. YHWH Himself speaks (i.e., “God has spoken” – BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* PERFECT).

1. I will exult – BDB 759, KB 831, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
2. I will portion out – BDB 323, KB 322, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
3. I will measure out – BDB 551, KB 547, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
- 4-5. “_____ is mine”
6. “_____ is the helmet of My head”
7. “_____ is My scepter”
8. “over _____ I shall throw my shoe” (i.e., an idiom of contempt)
9. “_____ shout loud, because of Me” (possible should be, “over Philistia I will shout aloud,” like Ps. 108:9c)

Notice the place names are all in the tribal allocations of Joshua.

1. one city – Shechem
2. one valley – valley of Succoth
3. one area – Gilead
4. three tribes – Manasseh, Ephraim, Judah (for Judah as scepter see Gen. 49:10)
5. three defeated Canaanite nations – Moab, Edom, Philistia

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 60:9-12

⁹Who will bring me into the besieged city?

Who will lead me to Edom?

¹⁰Have not You Yourself, O God, rejected us?

And will You not go forth with our armies, O God?

¹¹O give us help against the adversary,

For deliverance by man is in vain.

¹²Through God we shall do valiantly,

And it is He who will tread down our adversaries.

60:9-12 This strophe speaks of the impossibility of military victories without YHWH’s help and presence (i.e., Holy War).

1. verse 9 asks the military question
2. verse 10 asserts the spiritual reality (i.e., Holy War) that unless YHWH goes before Israel’s army, no victory is possible, cf. Ps. 44:9; 108:11

3. verse 11 asserts the physical reality that military victory by humans is vain and fleeting
4. verse 12 asserts that only with YHWH can there be victory, cf. Deut. 20:1; 1 Sam.17:45,47; Ps. 20:7; 22:16-17; 44:1-3,5-7; 146:3; Zech. 4:6). This is referring to the victory of God's purposes in Israel as a light to the nations, not just a conqueror.

The whole point of these assertions is the question of verse 10, "Have You, Yourself, O God, rejected us?" Unless He gives help there is no hope (v. 11b). If He does, there will be victory (v. 12), both for God's purpose (see Special Topic at Intro. to Psalm 2) and Israel's security and peace.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Read the Psalm and try to divide it into subjects, topics. Do you think vv. 1-3 and vv. 4-5 are separate topics?
2. What is the theological purpose of vv. 6-8? Why is it repeated in Psalm 108?
3. Verse 8 has several negative images. Explain them
4. What is the main theological truth of verses 9-12?

PSALM 61

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Confidence in God's Protection <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; on a stringed instrument. <i>A Psalm</i> of David.	Assurance of God's Eternal Protection	Prayer For Protection	A Prayer for Protection	Prayer of An Exile
61:1-4	61:1-2 61:3-7	61:1-2 61:3-5	61:1-2 61:3 61:4-5	61:1-2 61:3-5
61:5-8		61:6-7 61:8	61:6-7 61:8	61:6-7 61:8

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is obviously a royal Psalm (cf. v. 6). How God deals with the King represents how He deals with the nation (cf. v. 5).
- B. At first, verse 2 seems to imply exile but the rest of the Psalm does not support this. Therefore, verse 2a must be metaphorical of the King's sense of spiritual alienation.
- C. This Psalm has several memorable images of God.
 1. the rock that is higher than I

2. You have been a refuge for me
3. You have been a tower of strength
4. let me dwell in Your tent forever
5. let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 61:1-4

¹Hear my cry, O God;

Give heed to my prayer.

²From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint;

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

³For You have been a refuge for me,

A tower of strength against the enemy.

⁴Let me dwell in Your tent forever;

Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings.

Selah.

61:1 Two parallel IMPERATIVES OF REQUEST start this Psalm (cf. Ps. 86:6; Isa. 28:23; 49:1; 51:4; Jer. 18:19; Dan. 9:19; Hos. 5:1).

1. hear my cry – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. give heed to my prayer – BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

In verse 2 the psalmist says, “From the end of the earth I call to You.” This sounds like a prayer of an exiled person but the rest of the Psalm does not support this. Therefore, it must be imagery of a sense of alienation in his behalf.

The word “earth” can, in this context, be understood as “land” (i.e., Promised Land), see Special Topic at Psalm 1:2. Words have meaning only in context!

The AB understands the phrase to refer to *Sheol* (p. 84). This is based on Ugaritic parallels. If so, the psalmist faced death, not just discouragement.

▣ **“cry”** “Cry” (BDB 943) can refer to shouts of joy or, as here, a cry for help and protection (cf. Ps. 17:1; 88:2; 106:44; 119:169; 142:6).

61:2 “the rock that is higher than I” The title, “rock” reflects two Hebrew roots (BDB 849 and 700 I). The title first (BDB 849) appears in Deut. 32:4,15,18,30,31. Notice how it is expressed.

1. the Rock – Deut. 32:4,15,18,30,31
2. the Rock of his salvation – Deut. 32:15; 2 Sam. 22:47; Ps. 89:26; 95:1
3. the Rock who begot you – Deut. 32:18
4. their Rock sold them – Deut. 32:30
5. their rock is not like our Rock – Deut. 32:31
6. there is no rock like our God – 1 Sam. 2:2
7. YHWH is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer – Ps. 18:2; 31:3; 71:3; 94:22
8. My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge – Ps. 18:2; 28:1; Isa. 17:10
9. who is a rock, except our God – Ps. 18:31
10. YHWH lives, and blessed be my rock – Ps. 18:46
11. my rock and my redeemer – Ps. 19:14
12. my rock (BDB 700 I) – Ps. 42:9
13. my rock and there is no unrighteousness in Him – Ps. 92:15

14. blessed by YHWH, my rock – Ps. 144:1
15. YHWH an everlasting Rock – Isa. 26:4
16. to the mountain of YHWH, to the Rock of Israel – Isa. 30:29
17. is there any other Rock? – Isa. 44:8

BDB 700 I occurs only in Ps. 18:2; 42:9. It literally means “rocky crag,” but is a synonym of BDB 849 (both used in Ps. 18:2).

This imagery has several possible origins.

1. the mountain roots or pillars connected to creation
2. the site of YHWH’s giving of the law to Israel
3. the temple on Mt. Moriah
4. the strength and permanency of physical mountains
5. mountains are the highest point, closest to heaven where God dwells

▣ **“higher than I”** This could mean several things.

1. the rock that provides salvation and refuge that the psalmist cannot provide himself
2. the rock he is unable to climb or possibly understand (i.e., God’s permanency)
3. the contrast between God’s exalted place and the psalmist’s place of discouragement (i.e., when my heart is faint)

The LXX and Peshitta have, “You left me upon a rock.”

61:3 Much of the imagery used to describe God has military connotations.

1. a refuge linked to a shield in 2 Sam. 22:31; Ps. 18:31; Pro. 30:5
2. a refuge linked to a stronghold in Ps. 59:16
3. here a refuge linked to a “tower of strength” (cf. Pro. 18:10) in Ps. 62:7, “the rock of my strength”

61:4 Verse 4 has two COHORTATIVE VERBS.

1. let me dwell in Your tent – BDB 157, KB 184, *Qal* COHORTATIVE, cf. Ps. 27:5; 31:20; 32:7
2. let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings – BDB 340, KB 337, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12)

As verse 3 has military imagery, verse 4 has imagery related to the temple or possibly “rock” in v. 2. The imagery of v. 4a is also found in Ps. 23:6; 27:4.

The term “forever” is PLURAL, which accentuates the concept (see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5). I think in this OT, Wisdom Literature context it denotes a happy, long life in temple fellowship (i.e., tent) with YHWH (cf. Ps. 23:6).

▣ **“in the shelter of Your wings”** This is female imagery of God as a protective mother bird (cf. Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34). See notes at Ps. 17:8 and Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12.

▣ **“Selah”** See notes at Ps. 3:2 and Intro. to Psalms, VII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 61:5-8

⁵**For You have heard my vows, O God;**

You have given *me* the inheritance of those who fear Your name.

⁶**You will prolong the king’s life;**

His years will be as many generations.

⁷**He will abide before God forever;**

Appoint lovingkindness and truth that they may preserve him.

**⁸So I will sing praise to Your name forever,
That I may pay my vows day by day.**

61:5-8 This strophe relates to the King as a representative of YHWH's covenant people.

1. The King has made vows (i.e., faith promises) to YHWH.
2. YHWH has given him/Israel the land (i.e., inheritance, cf. Gen. 15:12-21) of Canaan to those who fear Him.
3. YHWH will prolong the King's life (note royal hyperboles).
4. The King will sit enthroned before God forever (obviously "forever" is not eternal but prolonged days). Be careful of reading NT developed theology back into Hebrew terms (royal hyperbole).
5. YHWH appoints (BDB 584, KB 599, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, prayer request) lovingkindness and truth (personified agents, cf. Ps. 40:11; 57:3; 89:14, "goodness and mercy" in Ps. 23:6, "light" and "truth" in Ps. 43:3). This same concept is stated in Pro. 20:28. To uphold the King is to uphold Israel.

61:5 The NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 531, has a good comment about "those who fear Your name." They represent the faithful followers (cf. Ps. 15:4; 25:12,14; 103:11,13; 118:4). NIDOTTE adds a list of slightly different forms.

1. those who fear You – Ps. 31:19
2. those who fear Him – Ps. 34:7
3. those who fear Your name – Ps. 61:5
4. those who fear God – Ps. 66:16

61:8 Because of God's goodness to the King and Israel, the King will sing praises (BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* COHORTATIVE) to Him.

Again the use of "forever" must be seen as metaphorical of a long, successful reign. The King's faith promises ("vows") are honored, performed, and fulfilled in the temple. This close is similar to Ps. 30:13, thereby denoting a set ritual (i.e., thank offering) or liturgy (connected to offering, cf. Ps. 7:17).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is this Psalm an individual lament or a royal lament?
2. Explain the phrase "from the end of the earth." Was the writer in exile?
3. Does verse 4 imply eternal life? (cf. v. 7) Is this a Messianic Psalm?
4. Define "vow" as it is used in this Psalm. (cf. vv. 5,8)

PSALM 62

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God Alone A Refuge From Treachery <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.	A Calm Resolve to Wait for the Salvation of God	Confidence in God's Protection	Confidence in God's Protection	Hope in God Alone
62:1-2	62:1-2	62:1-2	62:1-2	62:1-2
62:3-4	62:3-4	62:3-4	62:3-4	62:3-4
62:5-8	62:5-7	62:5-7	62:5-7	62:5-7b 62:7c-8
	62:8	62:8	62:8	
62:9-10	62:9-10	62:9-10	62:9-10	62:9 62:10
62:11-12	62:11-12	62:11-12	62:11-12	62:11-12

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 62:1-2

¹My soul *waits* in silence for God only;
From Him is my salvation.

²He only is my rock and my salvation,
My stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken.

62:1-2 This strophe describes the God for whom the psalmist waits in silence (notice how vv. 1-2 are almost the same as vv. 5-6). He waits patiently for God to act on his behalf (cf. Ps. 131:2).

1. from God is his salvation (BDB 447), v. 1
2. God only is his rock (BDB 849), vv. 2,6, see note at Ps. 61:2
3. God only is his salvation, vv. 2,6
4. God is his stronghold, v. 2

Because of this God, he shall not be shaken (BDB 556, KB 555, *Niphal* IMPERFECT, cf. v. 6). The phrase in verse 1 is repeated in verse 6 but verse 1 has added the term “greatly.” The TEV, NRSV, and JPSOA translate it as “never.”

62:1 “alone” This ADVERB (BDB 36) appears first in the MT in verses 1,2,4,5,6,10 for emphasis and a literary way to tie the Psalm together. There is exclusivism in a faithful lifestyle and a sinful lifestyle (cf. 62:4,9).

The JPSOA translates it as “truly.” NKJV translates only the first occurrence as “truly.”

▣ **“soul”** This is *nephesh* (BDB 659) which denotes the whole person. See notes at Ps. 13:2 and 16:9.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 62:3-4

³How long will you assail a man,
That you may murder *him*, all of you,
Like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence?
⁴They have counseled only to thrust him down from his high position;
They delight in falsehood;
They bless with their mouth,
But inwardly they curse. Selah.

62:3-4 This strophe describes the faithless adversaries.

1. they assail (lit. shout at) – BDB 223, KB 243, *Polel* IMPERFECT, PLURAL; this VERB is found only here in the OT and the meaning is derived from an Arabic root
2. they attempt to murder (lit. scatter) – BDB 953, KB 1283, *Pual* IMPERFECT; NET Bible thinks the VERB should be *Piel*, “all of you are murderers” (p. 927)
3. they are like (several English translations have v. 3c refer to the psalmist; NRSV, TEV, NJB, JPSOA, REB)
 - a. a leaning wall – BDB 639, KB 692, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE
 - b. a tottering fence – BDB 190, KB 218, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE
4. they counsel (BDB 419, KB 421, *Qal* PERFECT) only to thrust another down from his high position – BDB 632, KB 673, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
5. they delight in falsehood – BDB 953, KB 1280, *Qal* IMPERFECT
6. they bless (BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERFECT) with their mouth but inwardly curse – BDB 886, KB 1103, *Piel* IMPERFECT; one wonders if James 3:10 comes from this Psalm

By their fruits (Matt. 7:16-20) and words (Matt. 12:34-37) you shall know them.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 62:5-8

⁵My soul, wait in silence for God only,
For my hope is from Him.
⁶He only is my rock and my salvation,

My stronghold; I shall not be shaken.

⁷On God my salvation and my glory *rest*;

The rock of my strength, my refuge is in God.

⁸Trust in Him at all times, O people;

Pour out your heart before Him;

God is a refuge for us.

Selah.

62:5-8 The first two verses are almost exactly like 62:1-2. The psalmist describes his actions as a faithful follower as compared to the faithless followers.

1. he *rests* in God's salvation and glory ("honor," BDB 458)
2. he rests (assumed) on God as his rock and strength
3. he makes God his refuge

Verse 8 changes from an individual focus to a corporate focus (several English translations make it a separate strophe). It starts out with two IMPERATIVES addressing the community of faithful followers.

1. trust in Him at all times – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 37:3,5; 52:8; Isa. 26:4. The hard part is the phrase, "at all times," but it is the key to real peace and confidence (cf. Ps. 34:1).
2. pour out your heart before Him – BDB 1049, KB 1629, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 1 Sam. 1:15; Lam. 2:19 (i.e., be honest about your feelings and problems when praying to God; this is quite different from "silence" of verses 1 and 5. Verses 1 and 5 are waiting for God to act after prayer and verse 8 is a call to prayer.)
3. God is our refuge – God is not only the individual's source/place of safety, He is the community of faith's source/place of safety!

▣ **"Selah"** See note at Ps. 3:2; also Intro. to Psalms, VII.

62:5 "for God" In verse 1 this translation is accurate but here there is an added initial *lamed* (not a PREPOSITION), which is emphatic, "God Himself."

▣ The IMPERATIVE of "be silent" (BDB 198, KB 226, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is used here where the NOUN (BDB 189) is used in verse 1.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 62:9-10

⁹Men of low degree are only vanity and men of rank are a lie;

In the balances they go up;

They are together lighter than breath.

¹⁰Do not trust in oppression

And do not vainly hope in robbery;

If riches increase, do not set *your* heart *upon* them.

62:9-10 This strophe addresses all humans from different levels of society (i.e., low degree. . .rank). Without faith/trust in God they are vanity (BDB 210 I) and lies (BDB 469). The MT has "sons of men" twice. The translations get "low degree" and "rank" from a similar phrase in Ps. 49:2. The JPSOA has "Men are mere breath; mortals (BDB 35), illusion," which rejects the link to Ps. 49:2 as a parallel and interpret the "sons of Adam" (BDB 9) and "sons of *Ish*" as parallel and referring to all humans. To me it does seem that v. 10 refers to the exploitation of the poor and powerless by the socially elite of Israel, and Psalm 49 would be a good parallel.

The second statement uses the imagery of commercial scales. In Hebrew that which is heavy is honorable/valuable; that which is light (i.e., breath, BDB 210 I used twice) is dishonorable.

Verse 10 has three JUSSIVES admonishing the faithless followers.

1. do not trust in oppression – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERFECT NEGATED used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. do not vainly hope in robbery – BDB 211, KB 236, *Qal* IMPERFECT NEGATED used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. do not set your heart on increasing wealth – BDB 1011, KB 1483, *Qal* IMPERFECT NEGATED used in a JUSSIVE sense

Based on this strophe and 62:4, the people being addressed are members of Israel's elite class (i.e., civil, military, commerce).

62:9 “vanity. . .breath” These are both translations of the Hebrew term (BDB 210 I). This is one of two key terms in Ecclesiastes. See my notes on the word at Eccl. 1:2 online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 62:11-12

¹¹Once God has spoken;
Twice I have heard this:
That power belongs to God;
¹²And lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord,
For You recompense a man according to his work.

62:11-12 This last strophe addresses the theological issue of how it is that the unrighteous prosper (cf. Job; Psalms 37 and 73). The Mosaic law asserted wealth, health, and success to covenant obedience (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30). The “two ways” (cf. Psalm 1; Deut. 30:15,19) also asserts the same. However, in reality, often the wealthy are exploitative, greedy, ruthless, devious manipulators who embody the essence of the Fall: more and more for me at any cost!

We live in an unfair world. God has promised to set it straight. There is a judgment day. One day we will reap what we have sown (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12)! A book that has helped me in this area is Hannah Whithall Smith's *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*.

62:11 This is an idiom for a well known, often expressed, truth in three parts (i.e., power, covenant loyalty, and recompense). Because of the Fall, some humans will experience YHWH's power; some His lovingkindness! Our actions show who our Father is!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How are verses 1 and 5 different from verse 8?
2. Who is verse 3c referring to?
3. Why should verse 8 be a separate strophe?
4. Who does verse 9 address? How is it related to Ps. 49:2?
5. List the points of what God has spoken and the psalmist has heard several times.

PSALM 63

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Thirsting Soul Satisfied in God <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah	Joyful in the Fellowship of God	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies	Longing For God	Yearning For God
63:1-5	63:1-2 63:3-5	63:1-4 63:5-8	63:1-5	63:1-2 63:3-5
63:6-8	63:6-8		63:6-8	63:6-8
63:9-11	63:9-11	63:9-11	63:9-11	63:9-11

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Surprisingly this Psalm has no IMPERATIVES, JUSSIVES, or COHORTATIVES.
- B. This Psalm does not admonish others but describes a personal search for a deep, personal relationship with God (cf. Ps. 42:1-4).
- C. Like so many Psalms there is an aspect of tension with enemies (cf. vv. 9-11). Because of verse 11, this reflects the thoughts of the King, so they may be
 1. foreigners
 2. faithless Israelites
- D. Verse 11a does not automatically make this a royal Psalm; see note at 63:9-11 for options.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 63:1-5

¹O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly;

My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You,

In a dry and weary land where there is no water.

²Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary,

To see Your power and Your glory.

³Because Your lovingkindness is better than life,

My lips will praise You.

⁴So I will bless You as long as I live;

I will lift up my hands in Your name.

⁵My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness,

And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips.

63:1-5 In this strophe the psalmist describes how he feels about God (v. 1, *Elohim* and *El*, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1).

1. he seeks Him earnestly (lit. “look early”) – BDB 1007, KB 1465, *Piel* IMPERFECT (cf. Ps. 78:34; Pro. 7:15; 8:17; 13:24; Isa. 26:9; Hos. 5:15); the same root is the NOUN form for “dawn” (cf. Ps. 57:8)
2. his soul (lit. *nephesh*, BDB 659) thirsts for God – BDB 854, KB 1032, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 42:2; 84:2; Matt. 5:6
3. his flesh (BDB 142) yearns (lit. “faints”) for God – BDB 484, KB 480, *Qal* PERFECT; only here in the OT; from Arabic root “to be pale of face”
4. he describes his thirsting and fainting as caused by being in a dry and weary land where there is no water (cf. Ps. 143:6); God is often described as the source of “living water” (cf. Isa. 12:3; 44:3; 55:1; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; John 4:10; 7:37-38; Rev. 21:6; 22:17)

This intense search for God in a dry land is caused because of the refreshing joy he knew earlier in the worship in the temple (v. 2).

1. beheld God in the sanctuary (lit. “in holiness,” cf. Ps. 60:6; 89:35; 102:19) – BDB 302, KB 301, *Qal* PERFECT; this word can mean sanctuary but does not necessarily mean that; I do not think this line of the poem mandates a person in exile; AB (p. 97) even suggests “heavenly sanctuary” in v. 5 and “eternal life” in v. 4
2. see His power – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. Ps. 59:17; 62:11
3. see His glory – BDB VERB above assumed (a double OBJECT)

Exactly how the power and glory were manifested is not stated but since the word “glory” is used of the *Shekinah* glory (i.e., cloud) during the wilderness wanderings (cf. Exod. 16:7,10; 24:16,17; 40:34,35; Lev. 9:6,23; Num. 14:10; 16:19; 17:7,10; 20:6), possibly something like 1 Kgs. 8:11 occurred again (the other option is a vision of God Himself, like Isaiah 6 or Ezekiel 1; 10).

63:3-5 These verses describe how the psalmist praises God because of His lovingkindness (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7) is better than life.

1. his lips will praise God – BDB 986 II, KB 1387, *Piel* IMPERFECT
2. he will bless God as long as he lives – BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERFECT
3. he will lift up his hands – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT

4. his soul is satisfied – BDB 959, KB 1302, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 36:8
5. his mouth offers praises with joyful lips – BDB 237 II, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERFECT

63:4 “lift up hands” See note at Ps. 28:2.

▣ **“in Your name”** See Special Topic: The Name of YHWH at Ps. 5:11-12.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 63:6-8

**⁶When I remember You on my bed,
I meditate on You in the night watches,
⁷For You have been my help,
And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.
⁸My soul clings to You;
Your right hand upholds me.**

63:6-8 This strophe continues the psalmist’s reflection of God’s goodness and care.

1. he remembers God as he sleeps – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Deut. 6:6-9; Ps. 119:15, 48,97,99;
2. he meditates on God at night – BDB 211 I, KB 237, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 4:4
3. God has been his help (BDB 740 I) – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 27:9
4. he is protected (in the shadow of God’s wings) and sings for joy – BDB 943, KB 1247; *Piel* IMPERFECT
5. he (lit. *nephesh*) clings to God – BDB 179, KB 209, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Gen. 2:24; Ruth 1:14; 2 Kgs. 18:6
6. God’s right hand exploits him – BDB 1069, KB 1751, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 18:35; 41:12

Notice how #5 and #6 reflect both sides of the covenant relationship. It invokes choices and actions by both God and human.

63:7 “in the shadow of Your wings” See note at Ps. 17:8 and Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12.

63:8 “right hand” See note at Ps. 18:35 and Special Topic: Hand at Ps. 7:3-4.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 63:9-11

**⁹But those who seek my life to destroy it,
Will go into the depths of the earth.
¹⁰They will be delivered over to the power of the sword;
They will be a prey for foxes.
¹¹But the king will rejoice in God;
Everyone who swears by Him will glory,
For the mouths of those who speak lies will be stopped.**

63:9-11 As happens often in the Psalms, a strophe is addressed to the psalmist’s enemies. In this one “the king” is specifically mentioned. This could mean

1. the king is the psalmist

2. the psalmist is addressing problems the king faced and expresses how he knows the king would feel (cf. v. 11a)
 3. it is a literary technique to link individual Psalms to corporate Psalms (cf. v. 11b)
- These are statements about the enemies (i.e., those who seek his life to destroy it and, thereby Israel).
1. they will go into the depths of the earth (i.e., the Pit, *Sheol*, the grave, see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6).

In the OT all humans go to *Sheol*, as all humans go to *Hades* in the NT to wait judgment day. It is possible that “the lowest part” represented the abode of the faithless follower and pagan.

2. they will be poured out to the power of the sword – BDB 620, KB 669, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
3. they will be prey for foxes (i.e., no proper burial)
4. the mouth of those who speak lies will be stopped – BDB 698, KB 55, *Niphal* IMPERFECT

Because of this

1. the king will rejoice in God – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. everyone who swears by Him (BDB 989, KB 1396, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) will glory – BDB 237, KB 248, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT, cf. Isa. 48:1; 65:16

Right and truth and faith will prevail in the end because of the character and purposes of our God!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is this Psalm similar to Psalm 42?
2. Was the psalmist in exile? Why or why not?
3. To what does verse 2b refer?
4. Where do you think verses 3-5 occur?
5. Who are the enemies of verses 9-10?
6. Is this a royal Psalm? Why or why not?

PSALM 64

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Deliverance From Secret Enemies <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Psalm of David.	Oppressed by the Wicked but Rejoicing in the LORD	A Prayer for Protection From Personal Enemies	A Prayer For Protection	Punishment For Slanderers
64:1-6	64:1-4	64:1-6	64:1-6	64:1-2
				64:3-4
	64:5-6			64:5-6
64:7-10	64:7-9	64:7-9	64:7-10	64:7-8
				64:9
	64:10	64:10		64:10

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The psalmist is distressed by secret adversaries. This implies fellow Israelites. They are called
 1. the enemy, v. 1 (BDB 33, KB 38, *Qal* PARTICIPLE)
 2. evildoers, v. 2 (BDB 949, KB 1269, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE)
 3. those who do iniquity, v. 2 (BDB 821, KB 950, *Qal* PARTICIPLE)
 For notes on the names of the adversaries, see 1:5; 5:10; 15:2-5.
- B. Their actions are (vv. 2-6) listed.
 1. they cause dread (BDB 808), cf. Ps. 91:5

2. they conduct secret councils
 3. they do iniquity
 4. they have sharpened tongues like a sword
 5. they aim their speech as arrows
 6. they attack from ambush
 7. they do not fear (i.e., God)
 8. they are firm in their evil plans
 9. they plan to lay snares secretly
 10. they think they are hidden (i.e., from God)
 11. they devise injustices
 12. they have a well-conceived plot
 13. they are evil in thought and heart
- C. God's actions against them are delineated (vv. 7-10).
1. He will wound them with an arrow
 2. He will make them stumble
 3. He will use their own words against them in judgment
 4. He will cause them to be ashamed
 5. His actions toward them will cause all men to
 - a. fear/revere
 - b. declare His work
 - c. consider His actions
 6. His actions will cause the righteous man to
 - a. be glad in His actions
 - b. take refuge (i.e., trust) in Him
 - c. glory in their hearts
- D. Human Speech can be a blessing or a curse (see Special Topic at Ps. 52:2).
- E. Although it is impossible to ascertain the historical setting or identity of the psalmist, it is interesting how many military images are used.
1. sword
 2. arrow
 3. ambush

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 64:1-6

- ¹Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint;
 Preserve my life from dread of the enemy.
- ²Hide me from the secret counsel of evildoers,
 From the tumult of those who do iniquity,
- ³Who have sharpened their tongue like a sword.
 They aimed bitter speech *as* their arrow,
- ⁴To shoot from concealment at the blameless;
 Suddenly they shoot at him, and do not fear.
- ⁵They hold fast to themselves an evil purpose;

**They talk of laying snares secretly;
They say, “Who can see them?”
“They devise injustices, saying,
“We are ready with a well-conceived plot”;
For the inward thought and the heart of a man are deep.**

64:1 “Hear” Many strophes in the Psalms are introduced with the IMPERATIVE (cf. Ps. 17:1; 27:7; 28:2; 30:10; 39:12; 54:2; 61:1; 64:1; 84:8; 102:1; 119:149; 130:2; 143:1). The Psalms are often prayers to God beseeching Him to act for His people or a righteous follower.

Prayer is a wonderful privilege to the people of God. It releases a power into the world that was not present before. I have put three Special Topics below in different aspects of biblical prayer.

SPECIAL TOPIC: EFFECTIVE PRAYER

A. Related to one’s personal relationship with the Triune God

1. Related to the Father’s will

- a. Matt. 6:10
- b. 1 John 3:22
- c. 1 John 5:14-15

2. Abiding in Jesus

John 15:7

3. Praying in Jesus’ name

- a. John 14:13,14
- b. John 15:16
- c. John 16:23-24

4. Praying in the Spirit

- a. Eph. 6:18
- b. Jude 20

B. Related to one’s personal motives

1. Not wavering

- a. Matt. 21:22
- b. James 1:6-7

2. Asking amiss – James 4:3

3. Asking selfishly – James 4:2-3

C. Related to one’s personal choices

1. Perseverance

- a. Luke 18:1-8
- b. Colossians 4:2
- c. James 5:16

2. Discord at home

1 Peter 3:7

3. Sin
 - a. Psalm 66:18
 - b. Isaiah 59:1-2
 - c. Isaiah 64:7

All prayer is answered, but not all prayer is effective. Prayer is a two-way relationship. The worst thing God could do is grant believers' inappropriate requests.

SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER

I. Introduction

- A. Prayer is significant because of Jesus' example.
 1. personal prayer, Mark 1:35; Luke 3:21; 6:12; 9:29; 22:29-46
 2. cleansing of the Temple, Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46
 3. Model Prayer, Matt. 6:5-13; Luke 11:2-4
- B. Prayer is putting into tangible action our belief in a personal, caring God who is present, willing, and able to act on our behalf and others, through our prayers.
- C. God has personally limited Himself to act on the prayers of His children in many areas (cf. James 4:2).
- D. The major purpose of prayer is our fellowship and time with the Triune God.
- E. The scope of prayer is anything or anyone that concerns believers. We may pray once, believing, or over and over again as the thought or concern returns.
- F. Prayer can involve several elements.
 1. praise and adoration of the Triune God
 2. thanksgiving to God for His presence, fellowship, and provisions
 3. confession of our sinfulness, both past and present
 4. petition of our sensed needs or desires
 5. intercession where we hold the needs of others before the Father
- G. Intercessory prayer is a mystery. God loves those for whom we pray much more than we do, yet our prayers often effect a change, response, or need, not only in ourselves, but in them.

II. Biblical Material

- A. Old Testament
 1. Some examples of intercessory prayer:
 - a. Abraham pleading for Sodom, Gen. 18:22ff
 - b. Moses' prayers for Israel
 - (1) Exodus 5:22-23
 - (2) Exodus 32:31ff
 - (3) Deuteronomy 5:5
 - (4) Deuteronomy 9:18,25ff
 - c. Samuel prays for Israel:
 - (1) 1 Samuel 7:5-6,8-9
 - (2) 1 Samuel 12:16-23

- (3) 1 Samuel 15:11
 - d. David for his child, 2 Samuel 12:16-18
- 2. God is looking for intercessors, Isaiah 59:16
- 3. Known, unconfessed sin or an unrepentant attitude affects our prayers.
 - a. Psalm 66:18
 - b. Proverbs 28:9
 - c. Isaiah 59:1-2; 64:7
- B. New Testament
 - 1. The Son and Spirit's intercessory ministry
 - a. Jesus
 - (1) Romans 8:34
 - (2) Hebrews 7:25
 - (3) 1 John 2:1
 - b. Holy Spirit, Romans 8:26-27
 - 2. Paul's intercessory ministry
 - a. Prays for the Jews
 - (1) Romans 9:1ff
 - (2) Romans 10:1
 - b. Prays for the churches
 - (1) Romans 1:9
 - (2) Ephesians 1:16
 - (3) Philippians 1:3-4,9
 - (4) Colossians 1:3,9
 - (5) 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3
 - (6) 2 Thessalonians 1:11
 - (7) 2 Timothy 1:3
 - (8) Philemon, v. 4
 - c. Paul asked the churches to pray for him
 - (1) Romans 15:30
 - (2) 2 Corinthians 1:11
 - (3) Ephesians 6:19
 - (4) Colossians 4:3
 - (5) 1 Thessalonians 5:25
 - (6) 2 Thessalonians 3:1
 - 3. The church's intercessory ministry
 - a. Pray for one another
 - (1) Ephesians 6:18
 - (2) 1 Timothy 2:1
 - (3) James 5:16
 - b. Prayer requested for special groups
 - (1) our enemies, Matt. 5:44

- (2) Christian workers, Hebrews 13:18
- (3) rulers, 1 Timothy 2:2
- (4) the sick, James 5:13-16
- (5) backsliders, 1 John 5:16

III. Conditions for answered prayer

A. Our relationship to Christ and the Spirit

- 1. Abide in Him, John 15:7
- 2. In His name, John 14:13,14; 15:16; 16:23-24
- 3. In the Spirit, Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20
- 4. According to God's will, Matthew 6:10; 1 John 3:22; 5:14-15

B. Motives

- 1. Not wavering, Matthew 21:22; James 1:6-7
- 2. Humility and repentance, Luke 18:9-14
- 3. Asking amiss, James 4:3
- 4. Selfishness, James 4:2-3

C. Other aspects

- 1. Perseverance
 - A. Luke 18:1-8
 - B. Colossians 4:2
- 2. Kept on asking
 - a. Matthew 7:7-8
 - b. Luke 11:5-13
 - c. James 1:5
- 3. Discord at home, 1 Peter 3:7
- 4. Free from known sin
 - a. Psalm 66:18
 - b. Proverbs 28:9
 - c. Isaiah 59:1-2
 - d. Isaiah 64:7

IV. Theological Conclusion

- A. What a privilege. What an opportunity. What a duty and responsibility.
- B. Jesus is our example. The Spirit is our guide. The Father is eagerly waiting.
- C. It could change you, your family, your friends, and the world.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PRAYER, UNLIMITED YET LIMITED

A. The Synoptic Gospels

- 1. believers are encouraged to persevere in prayer and God will provide "good things" (Matthew) or "His Spirit" (Luke) Matt. 7:7-11; Luke 11:5-13)
- 2. in the context of church discipline believers (two) are encouraged to unite in prayer (Matt. 18:19)

3. in the context of the judgment of Judaism believers are to ask in faith without doubting (Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:23-24)
 4. in the context of two parables (vv. 1-8, the unrighteous judge and vv. 9-14, the Pharisee and the sinner) believers are encouraged to act differently from the godless judge and self-righteous Pharisee. God hears the humble and repentant (Luke 18:1-14)
- B. John's writings
1. in the context of the man born blind whom Jesus heals, the true blindness of the Pharisees is revealed. Jesus' prayers (as anyone's) are answered because He knew God and lived accordingly (John 9:31).
 2. John's Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)
 - a. 14:12-14 – believing prayer characterized by
 - 1) coming from believers
 - 2) asking in Jesus' name
 - 3) desiring that the Father be glorified
 - 4) keeping commandments (v. 15)
 - b. 15:7-10 – believers prayer characterized by
 - 1) abiding in Jesus
 - 2) His word abiding in them
 - 3) desiring that the Father be glorified
 - 4) producing much fruit
 - 5) keeping commandments (v. 10)
 - c. 15:15-17 – believers' prayer characterized by
 - 1) their election
 - 2) their fruit bearing
 - 3) asking in Jesus' name
 - 4) keeping command to love one another
 - d. 16:23-24 – believers' prayer characterized by
 - 1) asking in Jesus' name
 - 2) desiring that joy be made full
 3. John's first letter (1 John)
 - a. 3:22-24 – believers' prayer characterized by
 - 1) keeping His commandments (vv. 22,24)
 - 2) living appropriately
 - 3) believing in Jesus
 - 4) loving one another
 - 5) abiding in Him and He in us
 - 6) having the gift of the Spirit
 - b. 5:14-16 – believers' prayer characterized by
 - 1) confidence in God
 - 2) according to His will

3) believers pray for each other

C. James

1. 1:5-7 – believers confronted with various trials are called on to ask for wisdom without doubting
2. 4:2-3 – believers must ask with proper motives
3. 5:13-18 – believers faced with health problems are encouraged
 - a. to ask elders to pray
 - b. to pray in faith will save
 - c. to ask that their sins will be forgiven
 - d. to confess sin to one another and pray for one another (similar to 1 John 5:16)

The key to effective prayer is Christlikeness. This is what praying in Jesus' name means. The worst thing God could do for most Christians is to answer their selfish prayers! In one sense all prayers are answered. The most valuable aspect of prayer is that the believer has spent time with God, trusting God.



NASB, NRSV	“complaint”
NKJV	“meditation”
LXX	“petition”

The NOUN (BDB 967) is used often in poetry for a “complaint.”

1. Job 7:11; 9:27; 10:1; 21:4; 23:2
2. Psalm 55:2; 142:2
3. Proverbs 23:29

The psalmist is addressing God about the unfairness of life related to the attacks of fellow covenant people.

▣ **“preserve my life from dread of the enemy”** The VERB (BDB 665 I, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used with the PREPOSITION “from” in Ps. 12:7; 32:7; 140:1,4. It is used of God keeping, guarding, or preserving in Deut. 32:10; Ps. 25:20; 31:23; 40:11; Isa. 26:3; 42:6; 49:8. God’s people can trust that He is protecting them. This is not meant to imply a life without problems, but the sure presence of the God and His gracious mercy toward those who seek Him.

▣ **“the enemy”** The word is SINGULAR but used in a collective sense (cf. vv. 2-6).

64:2 The VERB “hide” (BDB 711, KB 771, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is parallel to “preserve” in verse 1. The psalmist feels threatened by other covenant partners who secretly plan his demise.

Notice the psalmist asks YHWH to hide him but the wicked hide their secret plans to destroy him (cf. 64:5).



NASB	“tumult”
NKJV	“insurrection”
NRSV	“scheming”
TEV, REB	“mobs”
NJB	“gangs”
JPSOA	“crown”

This root occurs only three times in the OT. It is translated in the NIV as

1. Ps. 2:1 – “conspire”

2. Ps. 55:15 – “throng”
3. Ps. 64:2 – “noisy crown”

64:4 “blameless” The term (BDB 1070) denotes a moral innocence, not a sinless person (i.e., no known, intentional sin). It was used of Job (cf. 1:1,8; 2:3; 8:20; 9:20-22; Ps. 37:37). See Special Topic at Psalm 18:20-24.

64:5

NASB	“who hold fast to themselves an evil purpose”
NKJV	“they encourage themselves in an evil matter”
NRSV	“they hold fast to their evil purpose”
TEV	“they encourage each other in their evil plots”
NJB	“they support each other in their evil designs”
JPSOA	“they are themselves with an evil word”
REV	“they confirm their wicked resolves”

The NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 72, lists several possible meanings/connotations for the *Piel* form of the VERB (BDB 304, KB 302).

1. hold fast
2. they strengthen for themselves (i.e., mutual support)
3. they make firm for themselves (i.e., confirm their evil intents)

▣ **“Who can see them”** This phrase refers to

1. the secret plans to snare the psalmist
2. the disbelief that God knows and will act on the psalmist’s behalf (cf. Job 22:13; Ps. 10:11; 59:7; 94:7; Isa. 29:15; Ezek. 8:12)

64:6 In verse 6 there are three words that share the Hebrew letters, חפץ (BDB 344).

1. search out (NASB, “devise”)
2. well conceived
3. plot

▣ **“the inward thought and the heart of a man are deep”** In context this refers to the evil motives of the psalmist’s enemies. BDB defines “deep” (BDB 771) as “unsearchable” (cf. Job 12:22; Eccl. 7:24 [twice]) or mysterious. The NJB and the Anchor Bible translate it so as to describe YHWH’s knowledge of their actions. However, it seems verses 1-6 are about the enemies’ activities and verses 7-9 are about YHWH’s response.

The UBS Text Project (pp. 282-284) shows a number of textual issues and possibilities in these two verses. Most of them have a “C” rating (considerable doubt).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 64:7-10

⁷**But God will shoot at them with an arrow;**

Suddenly they will be wounded.

⁸**So they will make him stumble;**

Their own tongue is against them;

All who see them will shake the head.

⁹**Then all men will fear,**

And they will declare the work of God,

And will consider what He has done.

¹⁰The righteous man will be glad in the LORD and will take refuge in Him;

And all the upright in heart will glory.

64:7 This is a typical role reversal imagery. What the wicked did to the righteous (cf. vv. 3-4) is now done to them.

This same type of imagery may explain verse 8. The evil planners who used hateful words against the psalmist now have their own words used against themselves.

64:8 “shake the head” This is an idiom of surprise and rejection (cf. Ps. 22:7; 44:14; Jer. 18:16; 48:27; Lam. 2:15).

64:9 Notice the ultimate purpose of YHWH’s actions in the world (i.e., blessing or judgment, cf. Ps. 58:11; 65:8) is for all men to know Him (see Special Topic at Psalm 2 Introduction).

Verse 9 is surely hyperbolic and reflects what will happen to those in Israel but, like so many verses, it states a larger truth (cf. Ps. 46:10).

64:10 This verse is a unique concluding statement. Usually the concluding statement in the Psalms is

1. a praise to God
2. a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

▣ **“righteous man”** See Special Topic at Psalm 1:5.

▣ **“will be glad”** There may be a word play between

1. hear, v. 1 – שמע (BDB 1033)
2. be glad, v. 10 – שמח (BDB 970)

This would be a form of *inclusio*.

▣ **“refuge”** See note at Psalm 5:11.

▣ **“will glory”** The NRSV sees the VERBS “will be glad” (BDB 970, KB 1333) and “will glory” (BDB 237, KB 248) as IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense. Most English translations have them as ongoing statements.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why are there so many individual laments recorded in the Psalter?
2. Explain in your own words the last line of verse 6.
3. Explain the literary concept of “reversal,” which is so common in the OT.
4. Does verse 9 refer to Israel or the world?

PSALM 65

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Abundant Favor to Earth and Man <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Psalm of David. A Song	Praise to God For His Salvation and Providence	Thanksgiving For A Good Harvest	Praise and Thanksgiving	Thanksgiving Hymn
65:1-4	65:1-3	65:1-4	65:1-4	65:1-2a 65:2b-3 65:4
65:5-8	65:5-8	65:5-8	65:5-8	65:5 65:6-7b 65:7c-8
65:9-13	65:9-10 65:11-13	65:9-13	65:9-13	65:9a-d 65:9e-13

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm has a universal thrust (cf. vv. 2,5,8) because it deals with the God of creation.
- B. God's purpose for this planet was abundance and health (cf. Genesis 1-2; Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28-30), but mankind rebelled (cf. Genesis 3) and continues to rebel (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27), which has consequences both spiritually and physically (cf. Rom. 8:18-25).

- C. This Psalm reminds us of the original purposes of abundance (cf. vv. 9-13), which now is a hope for the new age of restoration (cf. Joel 4:18; Amos 9:13). This new age will bless the entire earth!
- D. Notice there are no IMPERATIVES (only one COHORTATIVE, v. 4). This Psalm is not a prayer request but an affirmation of God's actions in grace and provision. He seeks worshipers from all the earth!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 65:1-4

¹There will be silence before You, *and* praise in Zion, O God,
And to You the vow will be performed.
²O You who hear prayer,
To You all men come.
³Iniquities prevail against me;
As for our transgressions, You forgive them.
⁴How blessed is the one whom You choose and bring near to You
To dwell in Your courts.
We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house,
Your holy temple.

65:1 There is only one VERB (BDB 1022, KB 1532, *Pual* IMPERFECT) in v. 1. It seems to link to several items.

1. silence before You (cf. Ps. 62:1,5)
2. praise in Zion
3. vows performed (Thank Offering)

This is obviously a worship setting in the temple (cf. v. 4).

Note below #1 and #2 may be one item. If so, it is mankind's responsibility to praise God and fulfill his vows.



NASB "silence before You"
NKJV "praise awaiting You"
NRSV "praise is due you"
NJB "praise is rightfully yours"
JPSOA "praise befits You"
REB "it is fitting to praise you"
LXX "to you a hymn is due"

The MT has "silence" (BDB 189, דמיה) but the UBS Text Project gives the same consonants with different vowels (i.e., "befitting") a "B" rating (some doubt). Most English translations agree with this. This follows the LXX, Peshitta, and Vulgate translations. However, "silence" can denote a sense of guilt before God (cf. Ps. 39:2) and an expectant waiting before Him (cf. Ps. 62:1).

▣ "Zion" See notes at Ps. 2:6; 9:11; 20:2.

65:2 The God of creation is characterized as

1. the One who hears – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. The idols cannot see, hear, or act.
2. the One to whom all flesh (BDB 142) come (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT). There is a tension/contrast between
 - a. all flesh – vv. 2,5,8; Ps. 64:9; 66:1,4,8; 67:3-5; 86:9; 145:21; Isa. 66:23; Joel 2:28; Zech. 14:17
 - b. the covenant people – vv. 3-4 (see Special Topic at Psalm 2 Intro.); the OT people of God have become all who believe (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Eph. 2:11-3:13)

One wonders if the “all flesh come” refers to

1. being included in the people of God (i.e., salvation by forgiveness)
2. being addressed by the God of judgment and held accountable

65:3 The God of creation forgives (i.e., covers, BDB 497, KB 493, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 78:38; 79:9; AB sees this as an IMPERFECT used as an IMPERATIVE [p. 110]).

1. iniquities (BDB 730)
2. transgressions (BDB 833)

The PREPOSITION “our” in the NASB implies Israel (cf. v. 4). Notice how forgiveness is related to the fulfillment of covenant promises. Obedience is crucial (cf. Leviticus 26; Deut. 11:13-17; chapters 28-30). When obedience fails, the only hope is the mercy of God!

SPECIAL TOPIC: WORDS FOR FORGIVENESS

Here are most of the Hebrew words or idioms that express divine forgiveness of human sin and rebellion.

1. “forgive,” “pardon,” חָלַם – BDB 699, KB 757, i.e., Exod. 34:9; Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7; 19:22; Num. 14:20; 15:25-28; 30:5, 8, 12; 1 Kgs. 8:30, 34, 36, 39, 50; Ps. 25:11; 103:3; Isa. 55:7; Dan. 9:19; Amos 7:2 (this term is always used of God, never of humans)
2. “wipe away,” “blot out,” נָשָׂא (very common VERB with many meanings) – BDB 669, KB 724, i.e., Exod. 23:21; 32:32; 34:7; Num. 14:18; Jos. 24:19; Ps. 25:18; 32:1, 5; 85:2; 99:8; Micah 7:18
3. “cover,” “atone,” כָּפַר – BDB 497, KB 493, i.e., very common in Leviticus; Ps. 65:3; 78:38; 79:9; Isa. 6:7; 22:14; Jer. 18:23; Ezek. 16:63; Dan. 9:24
4. “blot out,” “wipe out,” מָחָה – BDB 562, KB 567, i.e., Neh. 4:5; Ps. 51:1, 9; Isa. 43:25; 44:22; Jer. 18:23
5. “heal,” רָפָא – BDB 950, KB 1272, i.e., 2 Chr. 7:14; Ps. 41:4; 103:3; Isa. 6:10; 57:18; Jer. 3:22; 17:14; 30:17; Hosea 5:13; 14:4
6. “passing over,” עָבַר – BDB 716, KB 778, i.e., Pro. 19:11; Amos 7:8; 8:2; Micah 7:18
7. “wash,” כָּבַס – BDB 460, KB 459, i.e., Ps. 51:2, 7; Jer. 2:22; 4:14
8. “cleanse,” טָהַר – BDB 372, KB 369, i.e., Lev. 16:30; Ps. 51:7; Pro. 20:9; Ezek. 24:13; 36:25
9. “cast behind the back,” שָׁלַךְ – BDB 1020, KB 1527, i.e., Isa. 38:17; Micah 7:19
10. “purge,” טָהַר – BDB 306, KB 305, i.e., Ps. 51:7 (this connotation of divine cleansing of this common VERB, is found only here)
11. “hide Your face from,” סָתַר – BDB 711, KB 771, i.e., Ps. 51:9
12. “remember” (neg.), זָכַר – BDB 269, KB 269, i.e., Isa. 43:25
13. “tread on” (lit. “subdue”), כָּבַשׁ – BDB 461, KB 460, i.e., Micah 7:19

65:4 “How blessed” See note at Psalm 1:1.

▣ **“the one who You choose”** This refers to the call of God to the Patriarchs and their descendants (i.e., Israel, cf. Deut. 4:37; Ps. 33:12). The amazing thing is that apparently the election moves from Israel alone to all humans (cf. vv. 2,5,8). This reflects Gen. 3:15, which is a divine promise of victory for all humans who believe and receive (see Special Topic at Psalm 2 Introduction).

▣ **“We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house”** The VERB (BDB 959, KB 1302, *Qal* COHORTATIVE) denotes one who is completely filled with goodness (BDB 375). This verse refers not just to physical abundance (cf. 65:9-13) but to intimacy with God! He fills us with Himself!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 65:5-8

⁵By awesome *deeds* You answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation,
You who are the trust of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea;
⁶Who establishes the mountains by His strength,
Being girded with might;
⁷Who stills the roaring of the seas,
The roaring of their waves,
And the tumult of the peoples.
⁸They who dwell in the ends *of the earth* stand in awe of Your signs;
You make the dawn and the sunset shout for joy.

65:5-8 This strophe describes two different situations.

1. creation, vv. 6,7,8b
2. salvation, vv. 5,7c, 8a

The purpose of creation was a place for mankind made in God's image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) to fellowship with God (cf. Gen. 3:8). After Genesis 3, this intent became God's goal of salvation and restoration for all the children of Adam and Eve (cf. Gen. 3:15).

Both “mountain” in verse 6 and “tumult” in verse 7 may refer to people, not creation (cf. Jer. 51:25). If so, this would parallel Deut. 32:8.

Notice verse 5 mentions that God answers but no prayer is specifically mentioned. Obviously it was a prayer of deliverance from

1. personal and national sin
2. national enemies (i.e., Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, cf. Ps. 2:1-3)
3. possibly the chaos of creation itself (v. 7)

65:5

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “awesome *deeds*”

TEV “wonderful things”

NJB “marvels”

This term (BDB 431 in the *Niphal*) is used of God's acts.

1. acts of delivering the Israelites from Egypt – Exod. 34:10; Deut. 10:21; Ps. 66:3,5; 106:22
2. YHWH Himself – Ps. 47:2; 68:35; 76:7; 145:4-7
3. YHWH's name – Deut. 28:58; Ps. 99:3; 111:9; Mal. 1:14
4. more general (i.e., adverbial) – Ps. 66:5; 139:14

▣ **“You who are the trust of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea”** What a powerful, inclusive statement. It is the logical extension of “monotheism” (see Special Topic at Ps. 2:7).



NASB, TEV,

JPSOA

“trust

NKJV

“confidence”

NRSV, NJB

“hope”

This NOUN (BDB 105) is defined by BDB as “the object of confidence” (cf. Job 8:14; Ps. 40:4; 71:5; Jer. 3:37), which in this verse, is YHWH, not the false gods of the nations (cf. “the tumult of the peoples,” v. 7c, cf. Psalm 2).

▣ **“the ends of the earth”** What a wonderful recurrent phrase, especially in Psalms and Isaiah. This phrase can be documented by two PREPOSITIONS, “to” . . . “from.”

1. “to” – YHWH’s person and activities
 - a. bring back – Deut. 30:4
 - b. judge – 1 Sam.2:10 (cf. Ps. 82:8; 96:13; 98:9)
 - c. name and praise – Ps. 48:10 (cf. Isa. 42:10; Mal. 1:11)
 - d. rules – Ps. 59:13
 - e. hope – Ps. 65:6
 - f. fear/awe – Ps. 67:7 (cf. Ps. 33:8)
 - g. Most High – Ps. 83:18; 97:9
 - h. salvation – Ps. 98:3 (turn to the LORD, cf. Ps. 22:27); Isa. 49:6; 52:10; 62:11
 - i. Creator – Isa. 40:28
 - j. redeemer – Isa. 48:20
 - k. Messiah’s reign – Ps. 2:7; Micah 5:4
2. “from” – the world coming to Him
 - a. the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD – Ps. 22:27
 - b. the ends of the earth we hear songs, “Glory to the righteous One” – Isa. 24:16
 - c. be saved, all the ends of the earth – Isa. 45:22-23
 - d. all the earth comes to Him at Zion – Isa. 2:2-5; 60:3; 66:18,23; Jer. 16:19

65:7 This verse could refer to

1. creation (i.e., defeat of chaos)
2. conflict with idolatry (cf. Psalm 2; Isa. 17:12)

65:8 “stand in awe” Same root as verse 5, “awesome *deeds*.”

▣ **“Your signs”** This refers to God’s acts of redemption for His people (i.e., call and protection of the Patriarchs, the exodus and wilderness wanderings, the conquest, etc.).

▣ The last line of verse 8 could refer to

1. creation (i.e., evening and morning)
2. stars twinkling (AB)
3. east and west as an inclusive geographical figure of speech (NET Bible)
4. the glory of day and night (Tyndale Commentaries)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 65:9-13

⁹**You visit the earth and cause it to overflow;
You greatly enrich it;
The stream of God is full of water;
You prepare their grain, for thus You prepare the earth.**

¹⁰**You water its furrows abundantly,
You settle its ridges,
You soften it with showers,
You bless its growth.**

¹¹**You have crowned the year with Your bounty,
And Your paths drip *with* fatness.**

¹²**The pastures of the wilderness drip,
And the hills gird themselves with rejoicing.**

¹³**The meadows are clothed with flocks
And the valleys are covered with grain;
They shout for joy, yes, they sing.**

65:9-13 This is the physical abundance that covenant obedience would bring (cf. Leviticus 26; Deut. 11:13-17; chapter 28). Abundance was YHWH's way to cause the world to come to Him because of His

1. love
2. care
3. provision

for Israel. He chose Israel to choose all! But Israel was not obedient (cf. Ezek. 36:22-23).

Notice the number of "You's" in the English versions of vv. 9-11 (i.e., nine). Creation responds to its Creator with bounty!

65:9 "You visit the earth" This is an idiom of YHWH's personal presence. In a sense, He is always in the world. But this imagery speaks of a special coming either for judgment or blessing. Here it is abundant agricultural blessing made possible by abundant water.

▣ **"overflow"** This VERB (BDB 1003, KB 1448, *Polel* IMPERFECT) occurs three times, here, where it is often translated "be abundant," and Joel 2:24; 3:13, where it is translated "overflow."

▣ **"The stream of God"** This phrase could mean

1. imagery of a full channel of water
2. rain from heaven (cf. Ps. 78:23; Mal. 3:10)
3. an eschatological allusion to the river that flows from the throne of God (cf. Ps. 46:4; Ezek. 47:1; Rev. 22:1)

65:11

NASB, NKJV	"Your paths drip <i>with</i> fatness"
NRSV	"Your wagon tracks overflow with riches"
TEV	"Wherever you go there is plenty"
NJB	"richness seeps from your tracks"
JPSOA	"fatness is distilled in Your path"

The MT has “and the tracks of Your chariot drip fatness.” This is imagery of YHWH riding on the thunder clouds bringing rain (cf. Ps. 18:7-15). This is ANE, or especially Canaanite, imagery of *Ba'al*, the storm god (i.e., fertility).

65:12-13 The blessed physical locations (i.e., pastures, hills, meadows, valleys) are personified and shout for joy (BDB 929, KB 1206, *Hithpoel* IMPERFECT) and sing (BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* IMPERFECT). This praise of inanimate things reminds me of Jesus’ words about the stones in Luke 19:40. One day all creation (animate and inanimate) will cry out in joy to its Creator (cf. Ps. 103:20-22; 145:10; Rom. 8:18-25)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the best guess about the object of the psalmist’s vow in verse 1?
2. How are creation and “the ends of the earth” linked?
3. Explain the theological significance of verse 3.
4. How do “the mountains” and “the tumult of the peoples” parallel?
5. Do verses 9-13 describe a yearly event or an eschatological event?
6. How does one balance verses 2, 5, and 8 with verse 4?

PSALM 66

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Praise for God's Mighty Deeds and for His Answer to Prayer <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Song. A Psalm	Praise to God For His Awesome Works	Liturgy of Praise and Thanksgiving	A Song of Praise and Thanksgiving	Corporate Prayer of Thanksgiving
66:1-4	66:1-4	66:1-4	66:1-4	66:1-3a 66:3b-4
66:5-7	66:5-7	66:5-7	66:5-9	66:5-6b 66:6c-7
66:8-15	66:8-12 66:13-15	66:8-12 66:13-15	 66:10-12 66:13-15	66:8-9 66:10-12 66:13-14 66:15
66:16-20	66:16-19 66:20	66:16-19 66:20	66:16-19 66:20	66:16-19 66:20

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Derek Kidner, in the *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary* series (p. 251) entitles this Psalm, “The God of All. . .of Many. . .of One.” This seems to be a wonderful way of catching the essence of this Psalm. It starts out with a universal emphasis and moves to the praise of Israel and finally to the exaltation of one worshiper.
- B. This Psalm is very much like its neighbors, Psalms 65 and 67. They all speak of the universal love of God for all humans. In this way they are very similar to the prophets Isaiah and Jonah.
- C. The historical setting of this Psalm is uncertain. It is true that the Arabic translation says “a Psalm of David,” but it seems that this Psalm fits better into the life of Hezekiah. There is a national disaster and a personal crisis. It seems that the invasion of Assyria under Sennacherib in besieging Jerusalem and the illness of Hezekiah would have led to his death without his prayerful intervention to God fits this Psalm well.
- D. The eight IMPERATIVES in this Psalm are not prayers to God but exhortations to
 1. all the peoples of the earth (cf. vv. 1,4,8)
 2. all who fear/awe/revere God (cf. v. 16)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 66:1-4

¹Shout joyfully to God, all the earth;

²Sing the glory of His name;

Make His praise glorious.

³Say to God, “How awesome are Your works!

Because of the greatness of Your power Your enemies will give feigned obedience to You.

⁴All the earth will worship You,

And will sing praises to You;

They will sing praises to Your name.”

Selah.

66:1 “Shout” This *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE is PLURAL and verse 1 is similar to Psalm 100 and reminds me of the beautiful choir of Rev. 7:9. Notice the PLURAL speaks that all the earth is to shout joyfully to God (cf. vv. 1,4,8; Ps. 65:2,5,8; 67:17).

Notice this Psalm includes the general name for God, *Elohim* (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1), and not the covenant name for God, YHWH. It is all the earth that is to respond (cf. Psalm 67); the praise of Israel is not enough (cf. Ps. 103:19-22; 145:21; 150:6). If it is true there is only one God and He created the whole world and made man in His image (see Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7), then it is obviously true that He wants all humans to come to know Him. Israel was meant to be only a kingdom of priests to bring the world to God (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan at Psalm 2 Introduction).

66:2 “Sing the glory of His name” The idea or the concept of singing in worship can be documented from verses like this in the Psalter. It is interesting that in Eph. 5:19, where it speaks of being filled with the Spirit, that three of the five following PARTICIPLES speak of music. Praise is an appropriate activity in the worship of our God.

The term “name” is a way in Hebrew to reflect one’s character. It may be a circumlocution of the Hebrew’s fear to mention the name of God Himself, and that is why the concept of His name is so often substituted (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12).

Faithful followers are to glorify YHWH’s character and action (cf. Ps. 29:2; 79:9, 96:8). The “name” represents YHWH Himself (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:11-12).

For the term “glory” see Special Topic at Ps. 19:1.

66:3 “Say to God” This is the fourth IMPERATIVE of verses 1-3 directed to all humans.

1. shout joyfully to God – BDB 929, KB 1206, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 47:2; 81:2; 98:4,6 (COHORTATIVE in Ps. 95:1,2)
2. sing the glory of His name – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 9:11; 30:4; 47:6-7 [five]; 105:2; 135:3 (COHORTATIVE in Ps. 18:49; 27:6; 59:16; 71:22; 75:9; 101:1; 104:33; 146:1)
3. make His praise glorious – BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (lit. “put,” “set,” or “place”), cf. Isa. 42:12
4. say to God – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

▣ **“How awesome are Your works”** The term is “terrible” or “terrifying” (BDB 431, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Ps. 45:4; 65:5). Some translators, such as the Jerusalem Bible, translate this, “what dread you inspire,” but it seems that because of verse 5 that we are talking not of God’s character, but about God’s acts (cf. Exod. 34:10; Deut. 10:21; Ps. 65:5; 139:14; 145:6). God has acted in history (cf. the Exodus in vv. 5-7). His acts are acts of deliverance and revelation of His purposes (see Special Topic at Psalm 2 Intro.).

▣ **“Because of the greatness of Your power Your enemies will give feigned obedience to You”** This is a very difficult sentence in Hebrew to translate. It is obvious that God’s power draws even the reluctant praise of His enemies (cf. Ps. 18:44). The Hebrew seems to imply a “pretended obedience” (BDB 471, KB 469, *Piel* IMPERFECT). The Septuagint even translates it, “a lie.” The Hebrew word has the connotation of something that has grown small, pride that has been reduced, or insincerity (cf. Ps. 81:15). Which connotation was intended is simply uncertain here.

66:4 “All the earth will worship You” This seems to speak along the same lines as Phil. 2:9-11, that one day both friend and foe, both child and enemy, will acknowledge YHWH. On that day, all will sing praises to Him (cf. Ps. 22:27; 46:10; 65:2,5,8; 67:1-7; 86:9; Zech. 14:16). This has eschatological implications (cf. Micah 5:2-5a).

▣ **“Selah”** This term (BDB 699) also occurs at the end of verses 7 and 15. See note at Ps. 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 66:5-7

⁵Come and see the works of God,
Who is awesome in His deeds toward the sons of men.
⁶He turned the sea into dry land;
They passed through the river on foot;
There let us rejoice in Him!
⁷He rules by His might forever;
His eyes keep watch on the nations;
Let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

66:5 “Come and see” These two *Qal* IMPERATIVES match with the two *Qal* IMPERATIVES, “come and hear” of verse 16. God is a God who acts in history, who has chosen humans to record and explain His acts. We can know God by what He has done, as well as by what He has said. See Special Topic: Inspiration at Ps. 19:7-9.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ILLUMINATION

“God has acted in the past to clearly reveal Himself to mankind. In theology this is called revelation. He selected certain men to record and explain this self-revelation. In theology this is called inspiration. He has sent His Spirit to help readers understand His word. In theology this is called illumination. The problem arises when we assert that the if Spirit is involved in understanding God’s word—why are there so many interpretations of it?

Part of the problem lies in the reader’s pre-understanding or personal experiences. Often a personal agenda is addressed by using the Bible in a proof-text or atomistic fashion. Often a theological grid is imposed over the Bible allowing it to speak only in certain areas and in selected ways. Illumination simply cannot be equated with inspiration although the Holy Spirit is involved in each.

The best approach may be to attempt to assert the central idea of a paragraph, not interpret every detail of the text. It is the topical thought which conveys the original author’s central truth. Outlining the book or literary unit helps one follow the intent of the original inspired author. No interpreter is inspired. We cannot reproduce the biblical writer’s method of interpretation. We can and must attempt to understand what they were saying to their day and then communicate that truth to our own day. There are parts of the Bible that are ambiguous or hidden (until a certain time or period). There will always be disagreements on some texts and subjects, but we must state clearly the central truths and allow freedom for individual interpretations within the boundary of the original author’s intent. Interpreters must walk in the light they have, always being open to more light from the Bible and the Spirit. God will judge us based on the level of our understanding and how we live out that understanding.

▣ **“Who is awesome in His deeds”** Because a related term to “awesome” (BDB 431) is used in Deut. 4:34 (BDB 432) to describe the plagues of Egypt, and because there seem to be many allusions to the wilderness wandering in this Psalm, most would refer these deeds to the Exodus period.

▣ **“towards the sons of men”** This literal phrase, “sons of Adam,” reflects God’s concern with all humans. Genesis 3:15 is not a promise to Israel (which does not come into being until the call of Abram in Genesis 12), but to all humanity. Psalms 65-67 reflect this great truth, as do Isaiah and Jonah.

66:6 “He turned the sea into dry land” This could refer to the Exodus, Exodus 14 (cf. Ps. 106:9), or to the splitting of the Jordan River in Joshua 3 (cf. Jos. 4:23).

66:7 “He ruled by His might forever” This is a concept that God is ruling and reigning over all of His world, not just Israel (i.e., Deut. 32:8; Ps. 47:7-8; Acts 17:26; and the sections in the Major Prophets of God’s judgment on the nations).

▣ **“forever”** See Special Topic at Psalm 9:5.

▣ **“His eyes keep watch on the nations”** Because this seems to personify the nations, many have thought this referred to the concept of national angels (cf. the Septuagint’s translation of Deut. 32:8). This also may be affirmed by the idea of them rebelling, as in verse 7c, and also that possibly “keeps us alive” in verse 9

is a corporate reference to Israel. In the interbiblical period, the heavenly council was made up of the angels of the nations. In Jewish literature they seem to be hostile to Israel and it is only God's love for Israel that keeps her from being destroyed. See Appendix XIII and XIV in Alfred Edersheim's *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*."

▣ **"Let not the rebellious exalt themselves"** The MT has the *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, but the Masoretic scholars suggested in the margin it be read (*Qere*) as a *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. The Anchor Bible translates this phrase as, "lest the rebels rise up against Him." The Revised Standard Version translates this phrase as, "the rebellious cannot rise against Him." This is very similar to Psalm 2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 66:8-15

⁸Bless our God, O peoples,
And sound His praise abroad,
⁹Who keeps us in life
And does not allow our feet to slip.
¹⁰For You have tried us, O God;
You have refined us as silver is refined.
¹¹You brought us into the net;
You laid an oppressive burden upon our loins.
¹²You made men ride over our heads;
We went through fire and through water,
Yet You brought us out into *a place of abundance*.
¹³I shall come into Your house with burnt offerings;
I shall pay You my vows,
¹⁴Which my lips uttered
And my mouth spoke when I was in distress.
¹⁵I shall offer to You burnt offerings of fat beasts,
With the smoke of rams;
I shall make *an offering of bulls with male goats*. Selah.

66:8-15 This strophe refers to YHWH's treatment of rebellious Israel. He judged her, to restore her. All the peoples should rejoice because YHWH's redemptive purposes through Israel to all the nations is still viable (see Special Topic at Psalm 2 Introduction).

66:9 "Who keeps us in life" This could be (1) a historical reference to Hezekiah as he was about to die of a boil and prayed for God to spare him. Through Isaiah he was given ten more years of life (cf. 2 Kings 20). Or (2) a reference to the national life of Israel as she was invaded again and again by enemies from the Fertile Crescent. Whatever its exact allusion, it is obvious that God's moment-by-moment care for faithful followers is the essence of our gift of life. And that God is the only one who possesses life and He gives it to those who trust in Him (i.e., Ps. 65:5).

▣ **"And does not allow our feet to slip"** The Hebrew term "slip" (lit. "totter," "shake," or "slip," BDB 557) can be used for

1. carrying something on a pole (cf. Num. 4:10,12; 13:23)

2. a yoke of a prisoner around the neck (cf. Nahum 1:13)
3. here it is imagery of security. One's feet do not slip on the path of faith (cf. Ps. 55:22; 121:3; VERB in Ps. 15:5; 112:6).

This phrase is exactly opposite to the connotation of the Hebrew word for "faith" (see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1), which originally meant "a steady stance" (cf. Ps. 17:5; 38:16; 121:3).

66:10 "For You have tried us, O God" This is the concept of testing that comes from the metal processing industry (cf. v. 10b). God does test His children (cf. Gen. 22:1; Matt. 4:1). He does so to refine us, to purify us, and to make us stronger (cf. Zech. 13:9; 1 Pet. 1:7). See Special Topic at Ps. 11:4b-5.

66:11 "You brought us into the net" Notice the number of times "You" appears in verses 10-12 (cf. Ps. 65:9-11). The psalmist is chronicling YHWH's acts of judgment that were designed to bring His people to a place of repentance so that He could bless them (cf. v. 12c).

"Net" (BDB 845) comes from a root that means "to hunt" (BDB 844 II, cf. Ezek. 13:21) and is often used of an animal snare (cf. Ezek. 12:13; 17:20). This term is used in Habakkuk 1:15-17 to describe the military machine of the Babylonians. Therefore, it may be a reference to the invasion of the land of Israel.

Another use of this term is the idea of "fortress" (BDB 845 II, cf. Ps. 31:3; 71:3; 91:2; 144:2). This would convey a totally different meaning when translated into verse 11.

▣ **"You laid an oppressive burden upon our loins"** The term for "burden" (BDB 734, KB 558, found only here in the OT) is more of a restraint than the idea of a weight. BDB defines it as "compression" or "distress." The loins were the strongest muscles of the human body and were often used as a metaphor for a human's power (cf. Deut. 33:11).

66:12 "You made men ride over our heads" This is a metaphor describing evil people's (i.e., the pagan nations) control of God's people (cf. Isa. 51:23).

▣ **"We went through fire and through water"** These are both metaphors that speak of hard trials. See the beautiful statement in Isa. 43:2 that God will not leave us in the midst of our trials.



NASB	"a place of abundance"
NKJV	"to rich <i>fulfillment</i> "
NRSV	"to a spacious place"
TEV	"to a place of safety"
NJB	"to breathe again"
JPSOA	"to prosperity"
REB	"into a place of plenty"
LXX	"to remind" or "refreshment"

This term (BDB 924, KB 1201) is very difficult to translate. The basic meaning is to saturate. It is the same term that is used in Ps. 23:5 for "cup overflowed." It has sometimes been translated "a wide place" (cf. Ps. 18:19; 31:8; 118:5), meaning a place of rest, or "a fruitful place," referring to the Promised Land. Those translations that include the word "rest" here are basing this on a change of one Hebrew letter in this word (see NET Bible, p. 931, #7).

The UBS Text Project (p. 287) gives "to saturate" a "B" rating (some doubt) and mentions that it has two connotations.

1. abundance
2. rest or free breathing

66:13-15 This is where the author (cf. v. 16b, or Israel in a collective sense) comes to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay a vow (cf. Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21-23).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 66:16-20

¹⁶**Come *and* hear, all who fear God,**
And I will tell of what He has done for my soul.
¹⁷**I cried to Him with my mouth,**
And He was extolled with my tongue.
¹⁸**If I regard wickedness in my heart,**
The Lord will not hear;
¹⁹**But certainly God has heard;**
He has given heed to the voice of my prayer.
²⁰**Blessed be God,**
Who has not turned away my prayer
Nor His lovingkindness from me.

66:16 “Come *and* hear, all who fear God” This phrase starts off with two *Qal* IMPERATIVES (see note at v. 5). The Bible does not teach universalism, but it does teach God’s universal offer of grace to those who respond (cf. John 1:12; 3:16,36; 6:40; 11:25-26; Rom. 10:9-13). God responds to those who respond to Him. But notice the condition, “all who fear God.”

▣ **“And I will tell of what He has done for my soul”** As verse 9 expressed the corporate life of Israel, so verses 13-15 and 16-20 express the individual life of this one worshiper (i.e., the psalmist). He describes his prayer life. Usually the Psalms start out with an individual and end in corporate praise but this Psalm is the opposite.

66:17 As there was no silent reading in the ANE, so too, no silent prayers (note 1 Sam.1:13).

66:18 Attitude is crucial. See Special Topic: Prayer Unlimited, Yet Limited at Ps. 64:1. Human unconfessed sin blinds the individual to God’s presence and love. There are consequences in time and eternity to sin for both the believer and the unbeliever.

66:19 Faithful followers believe that God hears (cf. Ps. 18:6) and will respond appropriately! This is a faith assurance, not a certainty (see Special Topic: Assurance at Ps. 51:11b).

66:20 “Blessed be God” Blessing (BDB 138, KB 159, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. Ps. 68:35) comes from God and to God. There is no blessing apart from Him. He should be blessed/praised for

1. who He is (cf. vv. 10-12; 2 Cor. 1:3)
2. what He has done (cf. vv. 1-3)
3. what He is doing
4. what He will bring to pass (cf. vv. 4,8)!

▣ **“lovingkindness”** See Special Topic at Psalm 5:7.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is Psalm 66 related to 65 and 67?
2. Why is verse 3 so difficult to translate?
3. Is there any biblical evidence for national angels (cf. Daniel 10)?
4. Why does God test individuals and nations?
5. List the items that relate to prayer in verses 17-20.

PSALM 67

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Nations Exhorted to Praise God Deeds <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song	An Invocation and A Doxology	Thanksgiving for A Good Harvest	A Song of Thanksgiving	Harvest Song
67:1-7	67:1-2 67:3-4 67:5-7	67:1-3 67:4-5 67:6-7	67:1-2 67:3 67:4 67:5 67:6-7	67:1-2 67:3 67:4 67:5 67:6-7

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm, like Psalm 65 and Psalm 66, has a universal element (cf. vv. 2,3,4,5,7, esp. v. 2). The goal of YHWH is
 1. that the world may know Him (v. 2a)
 2. that the world may be saved (v. 2b)
 He makes Himself known through His
 1. acts of creation
 2. acts of election (i.e., Abraham and his seed)
 3. acts of redemption (i.e., especially the Exodus, Wilderness Wanderings, and return from exile)

4. these acts are recorded for all to read in Scripture
 5. future acts by promise and prophecy through the Messiah
- B. This Psalm is characterized by the use of JUSSIVES.
1. God's acts
 - a. God be gracious, v. 1 – BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - b. God bless, v. 1 – BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - c. God cause His face to shine upon, v. 1 – BDB 21, KB 24, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE
 - d. God bless, v. 7 – BDB same as b
 2. the people's response
 - a-b. the people praise (twice), v. 3 – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - c. the nations be glad, v. 4 – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - d. the nations sing for joy, v. 4 – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - e-f. repeat of verse 3 (i.e., a-b)
- C. I have enjoyed so much the insights of Derek Kidner. His commentary on Genesis and Psalms in the Tyndale OT series is a blessing to me. At the beginning of his comments on this Psalm, he says:
- “If a psalm was ever written round the promises to Abraham, that he would be both blessed and made a blessing, it could well have been such as this” (p. 254).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 67:1-7

- ¹God be gracious to us and bless us,
And cause His face to shine upon us— Selah.
- ²That Your way may be known on the earth,
 Your salvation among all nations.
- ³Let the peoples praise You, O God;
 Let all the peoples praise You.
- ⁴Let the nations be glad and sing for joy;
 For You will judge the peoples with uprightness
 And guide the nations on the earth. Selah.
- ⁵Let the peoples praise You, O God;
 Let all the peoples praise You.
- ⁶The earth has yielded its produce;
 God, our God, blesses us.
- ⁷God blesses us,
 That all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

67:1 Verse 1 is a prayer that has a universal redemptive flavor. YHWH desires that all humans made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) be restored to fellowship following the rebellion and sin of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. The promise of Gen. 3:15 is directed to all humans (there is no Israel until the call of Abram in Genesis 12).

The salvation/restoration of the damaged “image” has been God’s unalterable goal since the Fall (i.e., Isa. 2:2-4; 45:22; 52:10; 56:7; Micah 4:1-2). See the Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Psalm at Psalm 2 Introduction. It clearly states my basic theological presupposition and theological grid!

▣ **“us”** Who is the “us” (twice in v. 1 and vv. 6b, 7a)? From the reference to Numbers 6 (i.e., the Aaronic blessing) one would assume Israel (cf. Ps. 4:6), but notice the other references.

1. the peoples, vv. 3,4b,5a
2. all the peoples, vv. 3,5b
3. the nations, v. 4a
4. the nations of the earth, v. 4c
5. all the ends of the earth, v. 7b

God desires the salvation of all (cf. John 3:16-17; 4:42; Acts 2:17; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:1-2; 4:9-10).

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Psalm 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII.

▣ **“cause His face to shine upon us”** This wording of the blessing of YHWH’s personal presence and fellowship comes from the Aaronic blessing of Num. 6:22-27. The imagery is often repeated in the Psalms (cf. Ps. 4:6; 31:16; 80:3,7,19; 119:135).

67:2 “Your way” The way of God refers to His revelation. See the Special Topic: Terms For God’s Revelation at Ps. 1:2. Note the theological parallel at Ps. 16:11.

The theological concept of biblical faith as a way/road is crucial (see Psalm 1). Jesus described it as a gate and a road (cf. Matt. 7:13-27), a personal encounter followed by a Christ-centered life (cf. James 2:14-26). I have included the notes from my commentary on Acts 9:2 below.

Acts 9:2 “The Way” This was the early designation for believers (cf. 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22 and possibly 18:25,26). It has an OT background, speaking of lifestyle faith (cf. Ps. 1:1; 16:11; 119:105; 139:24; Pro. 4:10-19). Jesus uses this concept in Matt. 7:14 and uses the title for Himself in John 14:6. Christianity is a personal encounter followed by a daily relationship.

▣ **“earth”** See Special Topic at Psalm 1:2. Context determines meaning!

67:4 This verse cannot be negative (i.e., judgement only) because the judgment of God on uprightness will cause the nations to

1. be glad
2. sing for joy
3. be guided by God

The idea that the nations will be led by God takes on more significance when one notices the number of times (past, present, future) this term (BDB 634) is used of Israel (cf. Deut. 32:12; Neh. 9:12; Ps. 5:8; 23:3; 31:3; 43:3; 73:24; 78:14,53,72; 107:30; 139:10; 143:10). Now this same divine leadership is available for a repentant, believing, Gentile world (cf. Jer. 16:19).

67:6 The covenants of the OT promised agricultural blessings for those who obeyed the covenant (i.e., Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28). This verse implies a repentant believing group among the peoples of the earth. It has an eschatological thrust.

The Bible begins in agricultural abundance (i.e., Garden of Eden) and ends with the same imagery (Revelation 21-22). This implies that the place of fellowship between God and humanity is a restored Garden of Eden (i.e., a cleansed and restored earth). There is no way to know if this is imagery or prophecy.

Many scholars have seen this Psalm as a harvest blessing based on this verse. However, the abundance of universal elements makes this doubtful. This Psalm is about God's desire for all the nations to know Him (cf. v. 2) and follow Him (v. 4) and, thereby be blessed (v. 6)!

67:7 “That all the ends of the earth may fear Him” This is the use of the word “fear” (BDB 431, KB 432) in the sense of awe, respect, reverence. This universal theme is also stated in Ps. 22:27 and 33:8.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. To whom is this Psalm addressed?
2. Why is verse 2 so theologically significant? Is this theme unique to this Psalm?
3. Explain verse 4 in your own words. Is it positive or negative?
4. Will heaven be a restored earth?
5. Is the theological thrust of this Psalm unique to the Psalter?

PSALM 68

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The God of Sinai and of the Sanctuary <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm of David. A Song	The Glory of God in His Goodness to Israel	Liturgy for a Festival Celebration in the Temple	A National Song of Triumph	An Epic of Israel's Glory
68:1-4	68:1-3	68:1-3	68:1-3	68:1-2 68:3-4
	68:4	68:4	68:4	
68:5-6	68:5-6	68:5-6	68:5-6	68:5-6
68:7-10	68:7-10	68:7-10	68:7-10	68:7-8 68:9-10
68:11-14	68:11-14	68:11-14	68:11-14	68:11-12 68:13-14
68:15-18	68:15-16 68:17-18	68:15-16 68:17-20	68:15-16 68:17-18	68:15-16 68:17-18
68:19-23	68:19-20 68:21-23		68:19-20 68:21-23	68:19 68:20-21 68:22-23
68:24-27	68:24-27	68:24-27	68:24-27	68:24-25 68:26-27
68:28-31	68:28-31	68:28-31	68:28-31	68:28-29 68:30-31
68:32-35	68:32-35b 68:35c	68:32-35c 68:35d	68:32-35c 68:35d	68:32-24a 68:34b-35c 68:35d

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. It is difficult to find a unifying theme in this Psalm. It is possibly an anthology of YHWH's acts on Israel's behalf (i.e., Exodus, Conquest, establishment of temple in Jerusalem). The NASB Study Bible (p. 805) calls it "A processional liturgy celebrating the glorious and triumphant rule of Israel's God." If this is correct, this Psalm is similar to Nehemiah 9.
- B. Some scholars see this Psalm as a composite with no theme.
 1. NRSV, The New Oxford Annotated Bible (p. 728) says, "This is the most difficult of the psalms to interpret, and there is no general agreement either as to its meaning as a whole or in many of its details."
 2. The UBS *Handbook on Psalms* (p. 577) says, "both as to text and meaning this psalm is the most difficult of all psalms to understand and interpret. There is no discernable unity in the composition."
 3. The Jewish Study Bible (p. 1353) says, "Its vocabulary includes fifteen words found nowhere else in the Bible, plus other rare words, adding to the difficulty of interpreting it. Indeed, much of it remains obscure, and many consider it to be the most difficult psalm in the Psalter."
 4. One reason for the supposition of composition is the numerous names for Deity (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1) used.
 - a. *Elohim* (BDB 43), vv. 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 (twice), 9,10,15,16,17,18,21,24 (twice),26,28,31,32,34,35 (twice).
 - b. *Yah* (BDB 43), vv. 4,18
 - c. *Eloah* (BDB 43), vv. 8,28 (SINGULAR of *Elohim*)
 - d. *Adonai* (BDB 10), vv. 11,17,19,20,22,32
 - e. *Shaddai* (BDB 994), v. 14 (the name of YHWH for the Patriarchs, cf. Exod. 6:3)
 - f. *El* (BDB 42), vv. 19,20 (twice), 35
 - g. YHWH (BDB 217), vv. 20,26
 - h. King (BDB 572 II), v. 24
- C. Possible outline by themes.
 1. military victory
 - a. vv. 1-4 (unnamed enemies possibly Wilderness Wanderings, v. 4b)
 - b. vv. 11-14 (unnamed kings who invade but are defeated)
 - c. vv. 19-23 (unnamed enemies)
 - d. vv. 28-31 (Egypt)

2. covenant focus
 - a. help the least, vv. 5-6
 - (1) orphans
 - (2) widows
 - (3) poor
 - (4) lonely
 - b. abundance, vv. 7-10
 - c. Sinai, vv. 15-18
 3. the temple
 - a. procession of King and people of Israel to the temple, vv. 24-27
 - b. all peoples praise God (i.e., theme of Psalms 65-68) who reigns from the sanctuary (i.e., Jerusalem, Zion, Mt. Moriah, temple), vv. 32-35
- Therefore, I would guess this Psalm is denoting a military victory with a procession to the temple; date unsure!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 68:1-4

¹Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered,
 And let those who hate Him flee before Him.
²As smoke is driven away, so drive *them* away;
 As wax melts before the fire,
 So let the wicked perish before God.
³But let the righteous be glad; let them exult before God;
 Yes, let them rejoice with gladness.
⁴Sing to God, sing praises to His name;
 Lift up a song for Him who rides through the deserts,
 Whose name is the LORD, and exult before Him.

68:1-4 This first strophe has several *Qal* IMPERFECTS which may be used in a JUSSIVE sense. The VERBS “May. . .” and “Let. . .” are markers of this grammatical form.

1. let God arise – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. let His enemies be scattered – BDB 806, KB 918, *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. let those who hate Him flee before Him – BDB 630, KB 681, *Qal* IMPERFECT
4. let the wicked perish – BDB 1, KB 2, *Qal* IMPERFECT
5. let the righteous be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT
6. let them exult before God – BDB 763, KB 836, *Qal* IMPERFECT
7. let them rejoice with gladness – BDB 965, KB 1314, *Qal* IMPERFECT

▣ Notice the different ways of characterizing God’s enemies.

1. enemies, v. 1a – BDB 33, KB 38, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE (lit. “those hostile to”)
2. “those who hate Him,” v. 1b – BDB 971, KB 1338, *Piel* PARTICIPLE
3. the wicked, v. 2c – BDB 957

They are to “be scattered,” “flee,” “driven away,” “melted,” “perish,” but the righteous will

1. be glad, v. 3a
2. exult, v. 3a

3. rejoice with gladness, v. 3b
4. sing to God, v. 4a – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. sing praises to His name, v. 4a – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
6. cast up a highway for Him, v. 4b – BDB 699, KB 757, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
7. exult before Him, v. 4c – BDB 759, KB 831, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

68:1 “Let God (*Elohim*). . . arise” This could be understood in two senses.

1. arise from His throne so as to act
2. the ark of the covenant being carried into battle before the army of Israel (cf. Num. 10:35)

68:2 Several metaphors of defeat.

1. like smoke evaporating
2. like smoke before a strong wind
3. like wax melting at YHWH’s presence (cf. Ps. 97:5; Micah 1:4)
4. perishing (i.e., cause to vanish, BDB 1)

68:4 This verse has four IMPERATIVES which denote the actions of the righteous.

1. sing to God – temple activity
2. sing praises to His name – temple activity
3. cast up a highway for Him – royal metaphor of preparation, cf. Isa. 35:6-10; 40:3-4; 57:14; 62:10
4. exult before Him – temple activity

The unifying theme of this Psalm is temple worship (cf. 68:5,24-27,29,35).

▣ **“who rides through the deserts”** The concept of YHWH riding on the clouds (cf. v. 33) is an allusion to *Ba’al*, the storm god of the Canaanite pantheon who brought rain. Often the titles of pagan gods are attributed to YHWH, who is the only true God (cf. Deut. 33:26; Isa. 19:1).

The MT has “deserts” (BDB 787) but KB 879 suggests “clouds” from Ugaritic root (cf. Ps. 104:3). This fits the context best (cf. NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB, JPSOA, REB, cf. Ps. 18:9-15).

The ASV takes the root ערב (BDB 787) as referring to “Arabia” (cf. 2 Chr. 17:11; 21:16; 22:1; 26:7). See Contextual Insights, C. 1.

The LXX takes the root מערב (BDB 591 II) meaning “west.”

The Targums, followed by the Peshitta and late King James, has “heaven,” cf. v. 33.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 68:5-6

⁵**A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows,
Is God in His holy habitation.**
⁶**God makes a home for the lonely;
He leads out the prisoners into prosperity,
Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land.**

68:5-6 Notice the types of persons God acts as advocate on their behalf (i.e., Exod. 22:23).

1. orphans – Exod. 22:22; Deut. 14:29; 24:17; Ps. 146:9; Isa. 1:17; Jer. 7:6; James 1:27
2. widows – Exod. 22:22; Deut. 14:29; 24:17; Ps. 146:9; Isa. 1:17; Jer. 7:6; James 1:27
3. lonely – BDB 402, KB 405, from Arabic “to be alone”
4. poor – Job 31:16-20; Ps. 69:33 (lit. “bondman,” BDB 64); YHWH provides for the “needy” (BDB 776) in v. 10

Notice that in verse 6 there is a distinction between the characteristic, ongoing actions of God

1. makes a home (lit. “causes to dwell”) – BDB 442, KB 444, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE
2. leads out – BDB 422, KB 425, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE

for the poor and needy as contrasted with the permanent dwelling (BDB 1014, KB 1496, *Qal* PERFECT) of the stubborn/rebellious who will not change (BDB 710, KB 770, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) and who will dwell in a “parched land” (BDB 850, only here in the OT, but which is common imagery of the lack of YHWH’s presence and a sign of His judgment, cf. Ps. 78:17; 107:34,40).

▣ **“the rebellious dwell in a parched land”** One wonders if these rebels are the same people referred to in verses 1-2. But the context of verses 5-6 implies they are unfaithful covenant Israelites.

Note that prosperity marks the faithful followers, while lack of rain marks the rebels. This type of theology based on covenant obedience (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30) is known as “the two ways” (cf. 68:7-10; Deut. 30:15-20; Psalm 1).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 68:7-10

⁷O God, when You went forth before Your people,
When You marched through the wilderness, Selah.
⁸The earth quaked;
The heavens also dropped *rain* at the presence of God;
Sinai itself *quaked* at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
⁹You shed abroad a plentiful rain, O God;
You confirmed Your inheritance when it was parched.
¹⁰Your creatures settled in it;
You provided in Your goodness for the poor, O God.

68:7-10 The emphasis on “the two ways” continues. This strophe seems to merge

1. the Wilderness Wandering Period (i.e., Israel led by YHWH in the cloud, cf. Exod. 13:21; 14:19,24; Ps. 78:14; 105:39) and miraculously provided for (i.e., water, manna, quail)
2. the agricultural abundance of the Promised Land (i.e., the trans-Jordan and Canaan)

68:7 “when You went forth before Your people” This is an idiom of “holy war.” The battles were YHWH’s victory. He went before His people into battle (cf. Jdgs. 4:14; 2 Sam. 5:24). This was often symbolized as the ark of the covenant being carried by Levites at the head of the army.

▣ **“When You marched through the wilderness”** This implies the Wilderness Wandering Period (cf. Jdgs. 5:4-5). YHWH protected, guided, provided all Israel needed as they wandered some forty years before entering Canaan because of their unbelief (cf. Numbers 13-14). YHWH was so attentive to Israel during this time that the later rabbis called it “the honeymoon period between YHWH and Israel.”

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Psalm 3:2 and Introduction to Psalms, VII.

68:8 “The earth quaked” This was both a metaphor for YHWH’s presence (cf. Joel 2:10; Matt. 27:51) and a literal physical manifestation of His presence (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; Jdgs. 5:4-5).

▣ Notice that “God of Sinai” (i.e., the giving of the law, cf. Exodus 19-20) is parallel with the “God of Israel.” The author uses several different names for “God” (see Contextual Insights, B, 4). The uniqueness

of Israel was the presence of YHWH (monotheism) and His revelation of Himself through deed, promise, and written revelation (the OT).

68:9 “Your inheritance” This term (BDB 635) could refer to

1. the covenant people (cf. Deut. 32:9; 1 Kgs. 8:51; Joel 3:2; Jer. 10:16)
2. the land of Canaan (cf. Ps. 79:1; Jer. 2:7)

The term “land” (BDB 75, KB 90) is used of all the earth (cf. Exod. 19:5) but especially of Canaan (cf. Lev. 25:23; Deut. 32:43; 2 Chr. 7:20; Isa. 14:2,25; Ezek. 36:5). See Special Topic at Psalm 1:2.

68:10

NASB	“creatures settled in it”
NKJV	“Your congregation dwelt in it”
NRSV	“your flock found a dwelling in it”
TEV	“your people made their home there”
LXX	“your animals live in it”
NJB	“Your family found a home”
JPSOA	“Your tribe dwells there”

The LXX translated this as “animals,” but the FEMININE (BDB 312) means “a related community” (cf. 2 Sam. 23:13; 1 Chr. 11:15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 68:11-14

- ¹¹The Lord gives the command;
The women who proclaim the *good* tidings are a great host:
¹²“Kings of armies flee, they flee,
And she who remains at home will divide the spoil!”
¹³When you lie down among the sheepfolds,
You are like the wings of a dove covered with silver,
And its pinions with glistening gold.
¹⁴When the Almighty scattered the kings there,
It was snowing in Zalmon.

68:11-14 This strophe, like vv. 1-4 and 19-23, has a military theme. Because of verses 11b and 12b it may refer to (1) Joshua’s conquest of Canaan or (2) an invasion of Canaan/Israel that was defeated.

68:11-12 This refers to the news of the divinely-given victory. The quote of the women who bore the good news is recorded in verse 12. Women rejoicing over a military victory and shouting about God’s acts is also recorded in the “Song of Miriam” in Exod. 15:20-21.



NASB, NKJV	“she who remains at home”
NRSV, TEV,	
REB	“the women at home”
NJB	“the fair ones at home”
JPSOA	“housewives”

The MT has “pastures” (BDB 627 II) but all English translations change the root to “women.”

1. pastures – נוֹרָה
2. women – נְצוּרָה

68:13 This verse is understood in several ways.

1. the dove (cf. v. 13b-c) is a name for YHWH, as is *Shaddai* (i.e., Almighty) – NJB
2. it is a sarcastic allusion to the fact that some did not go to war (i.e., 13a, TEV; cf. Jdgs. 5:15-16)
3. it is a way of referring to victorious Israel
4. it is part of the spoils of battle (i.e., captured carved/molded treasure, possibly related to the worship of *Ishtar, Astarte*)
5. a reference to the clothing of the women messengers of verse 11 (Kidner, *Tyndale Commentary*, p. 259)
6. the war banners of the fleeing enemy (IVP *Bible Background Commentary*, p. 538)
7. the release of doves was part of the victory celebration (F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, pp. 23-24)

▣ **“sheepfolds”** This word (BDB 1046, KB 1637) is rare. This translation is based on Jdgs. 5:16. A similar word is found in Ezek. 40:43, translated “hooks.” It could mean “cooking fire” or “cooking pot” (BDB 1046).

68:14 “the Almighty” See Contextual Insights, B, 4).



NASB, NRSV “there”

NKJV “in it”

The MT has a FEMININE PREPOSITION (BDB 88) which seems to link back to verse 10 (i.e., the place where the community of YHWH’s inheritance dwells).

▣ **“Zalmon”** This is a mountain near Shechem (cf. Jdgs. 9:48). BDB suggests it refers to a mountain east of the Jordan. This is because of the name “Bashan” in v. 15.

The NJB translates it as “Dark Mountain,” because of an Akkadian root related to one of David’s men from the tribe Benjamin (cf. 2 Sam. 23:28).

The ABD (p. 1039) adds a third suggestion, that it comes from an Arabic root meaning “light” or “splendor.”

The reference to “snowing” is also problematic. It could refer to

1. a divine act during the battle, like the rain of Judges 4-5
2. figurative of sowing a defeated place with salt (cf. Jdgs. 9:45)
3. figurative of the bleached bones of the dead soldiers (IDB, vol. 4, p. 933)
4. a way to designate the historical date of the defeat of the invaders
5. the VERB “snow” is a *Hiphil* JUSSIVE in form, therefore, “let it snow on Zalmon” (i.e., a predictive sign of the divine victory)
6. the enemy’s weapons lying on the ground abandoned as they fled (NASB Study Bible, p. 806)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 68:15-18

¹⁵A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan;

A mountain of *many* peaks is the mountain of Bashan.

¹⁶Why do you look with envy, O mountains with *many* peaks,

At the mountain which God has desired for His abode?

Surely the LORD will dwell *there* forever.

¹⁷The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands;

The Lord is among them *as at* Sinai, in holiness.

¹⁸You have ascended on high, You have led captive *Your* captives;

You have received gifts among men,

Even *among* the rebellious also, that the LORD God may dwell *there*.

68:15-18 This strophe is about Mt. Sinai (i.e., Mt. Horeb) as God's special dwelling place. Other mountains of other nations are jealous (cf. v. 16).

68:15

NASB, NKJV,

NJB, LXX "a mountain of God"

NRSV, TEV "O mighty mountain"

JPSOA "O majestic mountain"

REB "a lofty hill"

The Hebrew term *Elohim* (BDB 43) can be used in an intensive sense (#2c, cf. Job 1:16).

This same mountain is called "a mountain of *many* peaks" in the next line of poetry. This term (BDB 148, KB 174) is found only here in the OT. It may mean

1. many peaks (i.e., a mountain range)
2. round peak

68:16b,c Usually YHWH's permanent dwelling place is the ark of the covenant, which came to abide in Jerusalem on Mt. Moriah (cf. Deut. 12:5; Ps. 87:1-2; 132:13-14), but here we are speaking of the Exodus. YHWH manifested Himself on Mt. Sinai/Mt. Horeb (cf. Exodus 19-20), where He gave the law to Moses before there was an ark of the covenant.

▣ **"look with envy"** This is a personification of the jealous mountains of Bashan. The VERB (BDB 952, KB 1280, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is found only here in the OT. It is used in a similar way in Ecclesiasticus 14:22 ("observe stealthily").

68:17 The imagery of this verse alludes to Deut. 33:2-5, where it denoted YHWH coming to Sinai with His holy angelic entourage (cf. Dan. 7:10; Rev. 5:11).

YHWH used Mt. Sinai as the location to meet Israel in a covenant-making revelation, but He chose Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem as the place for His presence (i.e., the ark of the covenant) to dwell permanently (cf. v. 16).

▣ **"thousands upon thousands"** This is a Hebrew CONSTRUCT of BDB 48 and 1041. The second word is found only here in the OT. BDB defines it as "repetition" or "redoubled." The context and parallelism help define the term.

68:18 In context this refers to God

1. going to the top of Mt. Sinai
2. as a military metaphor of tribute paid the victor

Paul quotes this verse in Eph. 4:8, but from a Targum translation that changes "received" to "give." This noticeably alters the meaning of the MT. The Peshitta has

“Thou has blessed men with gifts; but rebellious men shall not dwell before the presence of God.”

It is surely possible that the implication of the MT is that God receives the gifts of the nations and redistributes them to His people (see Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bibld Difficulties*, pp. 404-405).

The rabbis saw Psalm 68 as related to YHWH giving the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. They would have interpreted the “received/given” dynamic as referring to the Mosaic Law, but Paul saw it as the new age in Christ. He empowers His church with new revelation (cf. G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, p. 170).

In the context of verses 15-18, verse 18 must refer to YHWH’s “holy war,” whereby the enemies of Israel, both in transit (i.e., wilderness wanderings) and the conquest of Canaan, are defeated. This may be an allusion to “the blessings of Moses” in Deuteronomy 33 being extended to the later conquest and habitation of Canaan.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 68:19-23

¹⁹**Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden,**

The God *who* is our salvation.

Selah.

²⁰**God is to us a God of deliverances;**

And to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death.

²¹**Surely God will shatter the head of His enemies,**

The hairy crown of him who goes on in his guilty deeds.

²²**The Lord said, “I will bring *them* back from Bashan.**

I will bring *them* back from the depths of the sea;

²³**That your foot may shatter *them* in blood,**

The tongue of your dogs *may have* its portion from your enemies.”

68:19-23 Because “Bashan” is mentioned in verse 15 and verse 22, there must be a connection between the military-oriented strophes of verses 11-14 and 19-23. There are several obvious truths.

1. God is with Israel
2. God will deliver them from their enemies.

This strophe uses three names for Deity (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1).

1. *Adonai*, vv. 19,20,21
2. *El*, v. 19b (twice)
3. YHWH, v. 20

68:19 “who daily bears our burden” This may denote

1. YHWH’s constant presence with Israel
2. Israel’s constant need of a savior/salvation/deliverance (spiritually and/or physically, cf. Ps. 65:5)

The truth that YHWH carries His own is found in Ps. 55:22; Isa. 46:4.

68:20-23 These verses emphasize YHWH’s deliverance of the Israelite army (some died but most were saved). Their enemies may run but they cannot escape (cf. v. 22; Amos 9:1-4).

Verse 23 contains idioms of defeat and shame.

1. bathe your feet in blood (cf. Ps. 58:10; common idiom in Canaanite literature used of *Ba’al* and *Anath*)
2. dogs eat the dead enemy soldiers (cf. 1 Kgs. 21:19; Jer. 15:3)

68:21 “the hairy crown” This is imagery for a person’s scalp (cf. Deut. 32:42). Long hair was an OT symbol of dedication to God (cf. Numbers 6), but here of defeated enemies, possibly referring to their dedication to a pagan god and refusal to acknowledge YHWH.

68:22 “from Bashan” It is difficult to know if “Bashan” (BDB 143, בַּשָּׁן) should be

1. linked to verse 15 as a geographical location
2. emended to בָּתָן, a Ugaritic root for “serpent,” which would parallel “the depths of the sea” in the next line (NEB, cf. Amos 9:3, where the same parallelism occurs with the Hebrew word for “serpent”). The “depths” are also linked to the Exodus where YHWH split the sea and Pharaoh’s elite bodyguard drowned (cf. Exod. 15:5; Neh. 9:11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 68:24-27

- ²⁴**They have seen Your procession, O God,
The procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.**
- ²⁵**The singers went on, the musicians after *them*,
In the midst of the maidens beating tambourines.**
- ²⁶**Bless God in the congregations,
Even the LORD, *you who are* of the fountain of Israel.**
- ²⁷**There is Benjamin, the youngest, ruling them,
The princes of Judah *in* their throng,
The princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.**

68:24-27 This strophe describes a procession to the temple. Possibly the ark, which was taken into battle, is returned.

There are several groups mentioned or implied in the throng.

1. the Israeli king as a representative of YHWH, the true King
2. Levitical singers and musicians
3. maidens with tambourines (cf. Exod. 15:20; Jdgs. 11:34; Jer. 31:4)
4. the thirteen tribes represented by
 - a. Benjamin
 - b. Judah
 - c. Zebulun
 - d. Naphtali

68:24

NASB, NKJV	“They have seen”
NRSV	“are seen”
TEV	“seen by all”
NJB	“for all to see”
JPSOA	“Men see”

The question is, who sees? Is it the Israelite worshiper or all the opposing nations? The strophe implies Israel but the Psalm as a whole implies “the nations” (cf. vv. 28-31, 32-35).

▣ **“procession”** The term (BDB 237) is used only here for

1. people of Israel coming to the temple
2. Deity coming to the temple

▣ **“my King”** The first specific mention of YHWH as King is 1 Sam. 8:4-9.

▣ **“sanctuary”** This term (BDB 871) is used of

1. places set apart as sacred by God’s presence
2. the tabernacle and its courts
3. the temple and its surrounding areas
4. Jerusalem and its hills

68:26 “Bless God” This is a *Piel* IMPERATIVE. Israel must praise YHWH for His character and His actions!

▣ **“the fountain of Israel”** This is a unique phrase. It seems to refer to YHWH’s calling of the Patriarchs and His involvement in their barren wives having children. The only oblique possible parallel reference is found in Isa. 48:1.

68:27 There has been much speculation about why only some tribes are mentioned. I think there are three possibilities.

1. they represent the entire Promised Land
 - a. Judah and Benjamin the south (i.e., Judah)
 - b. Zebulun and Naphtali the north (i.e., Israel)
2. they represent the wives of Jacob (i.e., source of the 13 tribes)
 - a. Rachel
 - (1) Judah
 - (2) Benjamin
 - b. Leah – Zebulun
 - c. Bilhah – Naphtali
 - d. Zelph – no child listed
3. they represent the smallest tribe to the largest

▣ **“the youngest”** The MT has “the least of them” (BDB 859 I). This could mean

1. Benjamin the youngest son of Rachel
2. a small tribe, but Israel’s first king, Saul, came from it

▣

NASB **“in their throng”**

NKJV **“and their company”**

NRSV **“in a body”**

TEV **“with their group”**

NJB **“in bright-colored robes”**

JPSOA **“who command them”**

The MT has רגמתם (BDB 920), which could refer to

1. רגם – to kill by stoning (“sling,” מרגמה, BDB 920)
2. רגמה – heap of stones or crowd of people (BDB 920)
3. רגשה – throng (BDB 921)

The NJB emends the word (1) to ברקמתם, “to embroidery” (BDB 140) or (2) “variegated stuff,” קמהר (cf. Ps. 45:13b-14a). The UBS Text Project (p. 293) gives “crowd” a “B” rating (some doubt), but it is not specific about the root (i.e., #2 or #3).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 68:28-31

²⁸**Your God has commanded your strength;
Show Yourself strong, O God, who have acted on our behalf.**
²⁹**Because of Your temple at Jerusalem
Kings will bring gifts to You.**
³⁰**Rebuke the beasts in the reeds,
The herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples,
Trampling under foot the pieces of silver;
He has scattered the peoples who delight in war.**
³¹**Envoys will come out of Egypt;
Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God.**

68:28-31 This strophe is somehow related to YHWH's defeat of Egypt. It is uncertain whether it is the Exodus or a later military invasion.

However, with the defeat comes a wonderful offer to come worship YHWH in Jerusalem (cf. v. 31; Isa. 19:19-22; 45:14). It is this universal emphasis (cf. vv. 32-35) that links Psalm 65-68.

68:28 The power/strength (BDB 738) is God's and He has displayed it on behalf of His people to attract the nations to Himself.

68:29

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "because"

TEV, NJB,

JPSOA "from"

LXX

"resulting"

NET Bible

"as you come out of"

The MT has a PREPOSITION that could be understood in several ways. It seems to allude to verse 1, where YHWH rises for action on behalf of Israel in battle.

68:30 "rebuke" This is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 172, KB 199). This term is used of God's judgment of the nations in Ps. 9:5; Isa. 17:13. It seems to be used here of Egypt (cf. Ezek. 29:3; 32:2; possibly Isa. 27:1). She and the nations to the south (i.e., Ethiopia/Cush) are both specifically named in verse 31.

The NET Bible (p. 934) translates it as "war cry."



NASB, NRSV

"trampling under foot"

NKJV

"Til everyone submits"

TEV

"until they all bow down"

NJB

"who bow down"

JPSOA

"till they come cringing"

The MT has "stamp," "tread," "foul by stamping/treading" (BDB 952, KB 1279, cf. Pro. 25:26). The same root (in an IMPERATIVE form) means "to humble yourself." Possibly both meanings allude to Ezek. 32:2 or 34:18, where this same VERB is used of Egypt being humbled.

▣ **“the pieces of silver”** Again rare words or textual corruptions have caused the English translations to be uncertain.

The word “pieces,” רֶץ, which BDB suggests means “piece” or “bar”).

It is possible to emend it to בָּצֵר (BDB 131 I), which means “precious ore” (cf. Job 22:24, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 699-700), possibly “gold.” If so, then a translation of the line of poetry (v. 30c) would be “bowed down with gold and silver” (i.e., a tribute to YHWH).

68:31

NASB, NKJV,

REB, LXX “Envoys will come out of Egypt”

NRSV “Let bronze be brought from Egypt”

TEV “Ambassadors will come from Egypt”

NJB “from Egypt nobles will come”

JPSOA “tribute bearers shall come from Egypt”

The UBS Text Project (p. 297) gives “things of bronze” (BDB 365) a “B” rating (some doubt). It occurs only here in the OT. The other translations follow ancient versions and rabbinical speculation.

It is possible to see v. 30c and v. 31a,b as referring to tribute brought to God by North African nations (JPSOA).

1. gold
2. silver
3. bronze

▣ **“will quickly stretch out her hands to God”** This fits the understanding of the previous note. There is no need to emend the VERB “run” (BDB 930, KB 1207, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) to “stretch out” (NEB) when the MT is an idiom of the same reality.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 68:32-35

³²**Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth,**

Sing praises to the Lord,

Selah.

³³**To Him who rides upon the highest heavens, which are from ancient times;**

Behold, He speaks forth with His voice, a mighty voice.

³⁴**Ascribe strength to God;**

His majesty is over Israel

And His strength is in the skies.

³⁵**O God, *You are* awesome from Your sanctuary.**

The God of Israel Himself gives strength and power to the people.

Blessed be God!

68:32-35 This strophe reinforces the universal worship of YHWH in Jerusalem alluded to in verse 31.

Notice the IMPERATIVES.

1. sing to God – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 2. sing praises to the Lord – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
 3. ascribe strength to God – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 29:1-2; 1 Chr. 16:28-29
- YHWH is described as
1. who rides upon the brightest heavens (i.e., on the storm clouds)
 2. who speaks forth with a mighty voice (i.e., thunder, cf. Isa. 30:30; Rev. 11:19; 14:2; 16:17-18)

3. majesty is over Israel
4. strength is in the skies
5. awesome from the temple
6. gives strength and power to His people
7. is blessed by them

68:33a This imagery goes back to Deut. 33:26 and is alluded to in Ps. 18:10, also note v. 4b.

The “highest heavens” denotes the clouds of earth (cf. v. 34c), not the dwelling place of God.

His mighty voice is an allusion to creation by the spoken word in Genesis 1.

69:35 “awesome” This description goes back to Deut. 7:21; 10:17, also note Ps. 47:2 and 66:5. It refers to YHWH’s holy character and deeds of covenant deliverance.

▣ **“gives strength and power to the people”** This may be another allusion to

1. the Exodus
2. the Wilderness Wanderings
3. the Conquest of Canaan
4. His ongoing presence with Israel

PSALM 69

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Cry of Distress and Imprecation on Adversaries <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; with stringed instruments. According to Shoshannim. <i>A Psalm</i> of David.	An Urgent Plea for Help in Trouble	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies	A Cry For Help	Lament
69:1-4	69:1-3	69:1-3	69:1-3	69:1 69:2 69:3
	69:4	69:4	69:4	68:4
69:5-12	69:5-12	69:5 69:6-8	69:5-8	69:5 69:6a,b 69:6c,d 69:7-9
		69:9-12	69:9-12	69:10-12
69:13-15	69:13-15	69:13-15	69:13-15	69:13 69:14-15
69:16-19	69:16-18 69:19-21	69:16-18 69:19-21	69:16-18 69:19-21	69:16-18 69:19-20
69:20-21				69:21-23
69:22-28	69:22-28	69:22-29	69:22-28	69:24-26
69:29-33	69:29-33		69:29-33	69:27-28 69:29-31
		69:30-33		69:32-34
69:34-36	69:34-36	69:34-36	69:34-36	69:35-36

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm uses the two most common names for God.
 1. *Elohim* (i.e., a title that focuses on Deity as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life of this planet) – vv. 1,6,13,29,30,32,35 (also a variant form in v. 3, “God” [*Eloah*] and v. 6, “God” [*Eloah*] of Israel”)
 2. YHWH (i.e., a title that focuses on Deity as savior, redeemer, covenant-making God)
 - a. Lord of hosts (see Special Topic at Ps. 1:1), v. 6
 - b. YHWH, vv. 13,16,31,33
- B. The psalmist feels estranged from life, family, and friends (cf. v. 8) because of his trust in God (cf. v. 9).

Jesus uses this Psalm to describe His own feelings of rejection by fellow Jews. The difference is, the psalmist wants revenge and judgment (cf. Ps. 69:22-28), but Jesus asks for His persecutors' forgiveness based on their ignorance (cf. Luke 23:34).
- C. This Psalm has many prayers, some expressed as IMPERATIVES and some as IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense (see note at verse 6).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 69:1-4

- ¹Save me, O God,
For the waters have threatened my life.
- ²I have sunk in deep mire, and there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters, and a flood overflows me.
- ³I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched;
My eyes fail while I wait for my God.
- ⁴Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head;
Those who would destroy me are powerful, being wrongfully my enemies;
What I did not steal, I then have to restore.

69:1-4 This strophe is a prayer for deliverance (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) using several metaphors of distress.

1. the waters have come up to my soul (cf. v. 2b; Ps. 32:6)
2. sink in deep mire (cf. Ps. 40:2)
3. no foothold (BDB 765, only here in the OT, similar to imagery in Ps. 40:2)

He repeats this prayer in verses 14-15. The Jews lived in semi-arid lands and were afraid of water. Even Solomon manned his fleet with Phoenicians, not Jews. Palestine is notorious for its dangerous flash floods in the rainy season.

69:1 “soul” This is literally *nephesh* (BDB 659). See note at Ps. 3:2. Here it may denote “neck,” but if so, this is rare (see possibly Jonah 2:5).

69:2-3 The fluidity of imagery can be seen in the contrast between too much water in verse 2 and a parched throat in verse 3 (BDB 359, the word only here in OT, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 295). Water is a powerful image.

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. waters of creation | 4. tears |
| 2. flood | 5. necessity for life and health |
| 3. necessary annual rain | |

69:3-4 Verse 3 is figurative language describing sadness and weeping over the situation the psalmist finds himself in (cf. vv. 10-11). That situation is described in verse 4.

1. many people (i.e., his people) hate him without cause (cf. John 15:25)
2. they want to destroy/kill him
3. they are powerful people (cf. v. 12)

The psalmist asserts that their hatred and attacks are without cause (cf. v. 4c). He uses this as a way to denote his innocence in all areas related to the Mosaic covenant. He is not claiming sinlessness (cf. v. 5). See Special Topic at Ps. 18:20-24.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 69:5-12

- ⁵O God, it is You who knows my folly,
And my wrongs are not hidden from You.**
- ⁶May those who wait for You not be ashamed through me, O Lord GOD of hosts;
May those who seek You not be dishonored through me, O God of Israel,**
- ⁷Because for Your sake I have borne reproach;
Dishonor has covered my face.**
- ⁸I have become estranged from my brothers
And an alien to my mother's sons.**
- ⁹For zeal for Your house has consumed me,
And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.**
- ¹⁰When I wept in my soul with fasting,
It became my reproach.**
- ¹¹When I made sackcloth my clothing,
I became a byword to them.**
- ¹²Those who sit in the gate talk about me,
And I *am* the song of the drunkards.**

69:5-12 This strophe describes the situation of all believers. We know we are sinful (v. 5) but we seek to live godly lives (cf. v. 9a). In light of this tension the psalmist has several requests.

1. may those who wait (i.e., trust) in You not be ashamed because of me
2. may those who seek You not be dishonored because of me

This psalmist is boldly asserting that his problems are caused by his faith in YHWH (cf. vv. 7,9). It is this aspect of the Psalm that made it a perfect allusion for Jesus (cf. John 2:17). Also note that Paul, in Rom. 15:3, adds the substitutionary aspect (cf. Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45) from v. 9b to Jesus.

69:5 “my wrongs are not hidden from You” See note at Ps. 44:21.

69:6 “May. . .” This is the first in a series of IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense. This Psalm has many of these.

1. may. . .not be ashamed, v. 6 – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. may. . .not be dishonored, v. 6 – BDB 483, KB 480, *Niphal* IMPERFECT
3. may. . .not overflow me, v. 15 – BDB 1009, KB 1474, *Qal* IMPERFECT
4. may. . .not swallow me up, v. 15 – BDB 118, KB 134, *Qal* IMPERFECT
5. may. . .not shut its mouth on me, v. 15 – BDB 32, KB 37, *Qal* IMPERFECT
6. may. . .their table. . .become a snare, v. 22a – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE
7. *may it become* a trap, v. 22b – assumed from #6
8. may their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see, v. 23 – BDB 364, KB 361, *Qal* IMPERFECT
9. may Your burning anger overtake them, v. 23 – BDB 673, KB 727, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
10. may their camp be desolate, v. 25 – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE
11. may none dwell in their tents, v. 25, – same as #10
12. may they not come into Your righteousness, v. 27 – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT
13. may they be blotted out of the book of life, v. 28 – BDB 562, KB 567, *Niphal* IMPERFECT
14. may they not be recorded with the righteous, v. 28 – BDB 507, KB 503, *Niphal* IMPERFECT
15. may Your salvation set me securely on high, v. 29 – BDB 960, KB 1305, *Piel* IMPERFECT (used in a positive sense)
16. let heaven and earth praise Him, v. 34 – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERFECT (used in a positive sense)

All of these (except #15 and 16) express the psalmist’s prayers for God to act against his enemies. This is the element of the Psalm that is absent from Jesus’ use of this Psalm from the cross.

69:10-11 The psalmist’s very acts of prayer and humility became “a reproach” (BDB 357), “a byword” (BDB 605) to his powerful friends (i.e., “those who sit in the gate,” v. 12a), as well as the drunkards (v. 12b).

▣ **“fasting. . .sackcloth”** See Special Topic: Grieving Rites at Ps. 30:11.

Notice the contrast between the people of verses 5-12.

1. the pious writer who serves God in prayer, fasting, and service
2. the impious at the gate (i.e., place of leadership) who belittle his devotion and make up drunken songs

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 69:13-15

¹³But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, at an acceptable time;
O God, in the greatness of Your lovingkindness,
Answer me with Your saving truth.

**¹⁴Deliver me from the mire and do not let me sink;
 May I be delivered from my foes and from the deep waters.
¹⁵May the flood of water not overflow me
 Nor the deep swallow me up,
 Nor the pit shut its mouth on me.**

69:13-15 The psalmist continues his prayers. They are expressed

1. to YHWH
2. at an acceptable time

Notice the psalmist's trust in YHWH even amidst his troubled times and knowledge that at the appropriate time He will answer and save (cf. Ps. 32:6; Isa. 49:8; 2 Cor. 6:2). There is an appropriate time (cf. Eccl. 3:1-8).

The psalmist trusts in YHWH's

1. lovingkindness (see Special Topic at Ps. 5:7), v. 13b
2. faithfulness (see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1), v. 13c

Notice the two IMPERATIVES.

1. answer me – BDB 722, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 13c
2. deliver me – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, v. 14a

Verses 14-15 describe what the psalmist seeks to be delivered from.

1. do not let me sink (cf. vv. 1-2). There is a different parsing in
 - a. *Analytical Key to the OT*, by John Owens, where it is identified as a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (p. 374)
 - b. *OT Parsing Guide*, by Beall, Banks and Smith, identifies it as a *Qal* COHORTATIVE (p. 439)
2. may I be delivered from. . . There is a different parsing in
 - a. *Analytical Key – Niphal* IMPERFECT (p. 374)
 - b. *Parsing Guide – Niphal* COHORTATIVE (p. 439)

The psalmist describes his adversaries as “his foes” and “deep places of water” (v. 14b). Verses 14 and 15 use the same imagery as vv. 1-2 (cf. Ps. 124:4-5; Isa. 43:2).

69:15c “the pit” See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at Ps. 1:6, especially, *Sheol*, the holding place of the dead which is often parallel to “the pit” (cf. Num. 16:33; Ps. 28:1; 88:3-4; Pro. 1:12). It could refer to the grave (cf. Ps. 141:7).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 69:16-19

**¹⁶Answer me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good;
 According to the greatness of Your compassion, turn to me,
¹⁷And do not hide Your face from Your servant,
 For I am in distress; answer me quickly.
¹⁸Oh draw near to my soul *and* redeem it;
 Ransom me because of my enemies!
¹⁹You know my reproach and my shame and my dishonor;
 All my adversaries are before You.**

69:16-19 This strophe is characterized by IMPERATIVES of entreaty.

1. answer me, v. 16 – BDB 772 I, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. turn to me, v. 16 – BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (cf. Ps. 27:9; 102:2; 143:7)

3. quickly (lit. hasten), v. 17 – BDB 554, KB 553, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
4. answer me, v. 17 – same as #1
5. draw near to me, v. 18 – BDB 897, KB 1132, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. redeem me, v. 18 – BDB 145 I, KB 165, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
7. ransom me, v. 18 – BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (see Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem at Ps. 19:14)

Notice the basis for these prayer requests is:

1. YHWH's lovingkindness (BDB 338) is good, v. 16
2. YHWH's great compassion (lit. "mercies," BDB 933), v. 16
3. YHWH knows the psalmist's situation, v. 19
 - a. the psalmist's heart
 - b. the adversaries' hearts

69:17 "Your servant" This could mean

1. a special leader, like Moses, Joshua
2. a reference to David or his royal descendants (i.e., ultimately the Messiah)
3. the special Servant of the Messianic poems of Isaiah 40-55
4. just a title for a covenant believer (cf. v. 36)

69:19 Most English translations see v. 19 as going with vv. 20-21.

Notice the eastern view of life that emphasizes one's reputation.

1. reproach – BDB 357, cf. v. 20
2. shame – BDB 102
3. dishonor – BDB 484

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 69:20-21

²⁰Reproach has broken my heart and I am so sick.

And I looked for sympathy, but there was none,

And for comforters, but I found none.

²¹They also gave me gall for my food

And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

69:20-21 The Hebrew word for "gall" (v. 21) is "poison" (BDB 912 II), but can refer to bad wine (cf. Deut. 32:32). It is the LXX that changed it to "gall" or "bile" (green – *cholē*). In context this "poison" and "vinegar" refer to the insults of the psalmist's antagonists (i.e., covenant partners, close friends, and family, cf. v. 8).

This strophe is quoted in Matt. 27:34 as being fulfilled in Jesus' crucifixion. Verse 21b is alluded to in Mark 15:23; Luke 23:36; John 19:28-30. This Psalm and Psalm 22 are the two OT allusions and quotes that the NT uses of Jesus' crucifixion experience.

These Psalms are not predictive but typological. See notes at Psalm 22. Verses 22-28 do not fit Jesus' attitudes or words from the cross.

69:20 "I am so sick" This verb (BDB 633, KB 683) is found only here in the OT. The BDB suggests "sick" but KB suggests "incurable"; NJB has "passed cure." Possibly it means "in despair" (cf. NRSV, TEV, JPSOA). If "sick," then v. 29 is a parallel.

69:21 “vinegar” This term (BDB 330) refers to a cheap wine (cf. Num. 6:3). See Special Topic: Alcohol and Alcoholism at Ps. 4:7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 69:22-28

- ²²May their table before them become a snare;
And when they are in peace, *may it become* a trap.
- ²³May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see,
And make their loins shake continually.
- ²⁴Pour out Your indignation on them,
And may Your burning anger overtake them.
- ²⁵May their camp be desolate;
May none dwell in their tents.
- ²⁶For they have persecuted him whom You Yourself have smitten,
And they tell of the pain of those whom You have wounded.
- ²⁷Add iniquity to their iniquity,
And may they not come into Your righteousness.
- ²⁸May they be blotted out of the book of life
And may they not be recorded with the righteous.

69:22-28 This strophe discusses what the psalmist requests that YHWH will do to his enemies. See notes at v. 6 (IMPERFECTS used as JUSSIVES). There are

1. three JUSSIVES
2. five IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. two IMPERATIVES
 - a. make their loins shake continually – BDB 588, KB 609, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (this is the poetic opposite of v. 29b)
 - b. pour out Your indignation on them – BDB 1049, KB 1629, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

69:22 This verse is quoted in Rom. 11:9-10, which deals with unbelieving Israel.

Verse 25 is quoted in Acts 1:20 about the “Field of Blood” purchased by the priests with Judas’ betrayal money.

Verse 27a may be alluded to in Rom. 1:28, which deals with the sinfulness of all humanity (cf. Rom. 3:9-18, 23).



- NASB** “when they are in peace”
NKJV “their well-being”
TEV “sacred feasts”
NJB “their abundance”
REB “when they feel secure”

The MT has “security” (BDB 1022) but the Aramaic Targums have “sacrificial feasts” (cf. NRSV, TEV). The NRSV changes it to “a snare for their allies” (cf. JPSOA) using an idiom from Ps. 55:20 (i.e., close friends).

69:25 This is imagery from the Wilderness Wandering Period.

69:26 This verse seems to reflect Isa. 53:4 and 10 (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

The VERB form (BDB 319) of the NOUN translated “wounded” appears in Isa. 53:5 (BDB 319, KB 320, *Poal* PARTICIPLE). The VERB “smitten” (BDB 645, KB 697, *Hophal* PARTICIPLE) also occurs in Isa. 53:4. Verses 21 and 26 surely would have caused the Gospel writers to see a connection!

69:28 In the ANE citizens of a city’s names were recorded on a role. The Bible uses this imagery to reflect God’s knowledge. See Special Topic: The Two Books at Ps. 9:5.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 69:29-33

²⁹**But I am afflicted and in pain;
May Your salvation, O God, set me *securely* on high.**
³⁰**I will praise the name of God with song
And magnify Him with thanksgiving.**
³¹**And it will please the LORD better than an ox
Or a young bull with horns and hoofs.**
³²**The humble have seen *it* and are glad;
You who seek God, let your heart revive.**
³³**For the LORD hears the needy
And does not despise His *who are* prisoners.**

69:29-33 This strophe describes what the delivered psalmist will do because YHWH’s salvation has set him securely on high.

1. I will praise the name of God with song
2. I will magnify Him with thanksgiving

This implies a temple setting, as does verse 31 (a sacrifice). Verse 9 is also an allusion to the temple (i.e., “Your house” and “consumed as a sacrificial fire”).

YHWH’s deliverance of the falsely accused and abused psalmist causes others to rejoice and trust in Him (cf. vv. 32-33).

69:29 “afflicted” From this term (BDB 776) and the rare word in v. 20, “sick” or “in despair,” many commentators have asserted that the psalmist is ill, but I think the context denotes persecution and psychological distress, not physical illness, though they are often connected (i.e., cause and effect).

It is also possible that the metaphor of illness is used as another way to affirm the psalmist’s sense of sin (cf. 69:5). Healing is often an idiom for forgiveness (cf. Ps. 103:3; Isa. 1:5-6).

69:31 This verse is used theologically by post A.D. 70 Judaism for the substitution of “praise” for “sacrifice” (cf. Ps. 40:7; 50:13-14; 51:16-17). Praise pleases God.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 69:34-36

³⁴**Let heaven and earth praise Him,
The seas and everything that moves in them.**
³⁵**For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah,
That they may dwell there and possess it.**
³⁶**The descendants of His servants will inherit it,
And those who love His name will dwell in it.**

69:34-35 As so often in the Psalm, there is a final small strophe which is used in corporate worship (i.e., Ps. 103:19-22). The God of creation is also the God of Israel, who dwells in Zion/Judah with His people. They are characterized as

1. the seed of His servants
2. those who love His name

If this Psalm were of David's time, it would have "Israel," not "Judah," so either

1. David did not write it (i.e., cannot trust titles of the Psalms; they are absent in the Dead Sea Scrolls and often do not fit the textual information in the Psalm)
2. someone added the last strophe later, possibly after an exile.

69:34 "heaven and earth. . . seas" These three NOUNS are used to denote all of creation (cf. Exod. 20:4,11; Deut. 5:8; Ps. 96:11; 135:6; 146:6; Hag. 2:6).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the places this Psalm is quoted in the NT.
2. Why is it quoted so often?
3. How are the feelings expressed in this Psalm different from Jesus' attitudes?
4. List the verses that seem to point toward Isaiah 53.
5. Explain the symbolism of water used in this Psalm.
6. Is the corporate conclusion a later addition? If so, is it inspired?

PSALM 70

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Help Against Persecutors <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A <i>Psalm</i> of David; for a memorial.	Prayer for Relief From Adversaries	A Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies	A Prayer For Help	A Cry of Distress
70:1-3	70:1-3	70:1-3	70:1-3	70:1-2b 70:2c-3
70:4-5	70:4 70:5	70:4-5	70:4 70:5	70:4 70:5

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Notice the *Qal* IMPERATIVE “hasten” (BDB 301, KB 300) opens (cf. v. 1b) and closes (cf. v. 5b) the Psalm (i.e., *inclusio*). This VERB is repeated in Psalm 22:19; 38:22; 40:13,17; 71:12.
- B. Notice the number of IMPERFECTS used as JUSSIVES (note the parallelism).
 1. Negative
 - a. let those be ashamed, v. 2a – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 35:4; 83:17
 - b. let those be humiliated, v. 2a – BDB 344, KB 340, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 40:14
 - c. let those be turned back, v. 2c – BDB 690, KB 744, *Niphal* IMPERFECT
 - d. let those be dishonored, v. 2c – BDB 483, KB 480, *Niphal* IMPERFECT
 - e. let those be turned back, v. 3a – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT

2. Positive
 - a. let all who seek You rejoice, v. 4 – BDB 965, KB 1314, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - b. let all who seek You be glad, v. 4 – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - c. let those who love Your salvation say. . .,” v. 4b – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - d. God be magnified, v. 4c – BDB 152, KB 178, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - e. do not delay, v. 5d – BDB 28, KB 34, *Piel* IMPERFECT

C. Notice the wonderful synonymous parallelism of the Psalm.

D. This Psalm is repeated with some differences in Psalm 40:13-17, except for verse 3a.

1. Psalm 70:3, “turn back” (BDB 690 I)
2. Psalm 40:15, “appalled” (BDB 1030)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 70:1-3

¹O God, *hasten* to deliver me;
 O LORD, hasten to my help!
²Let those be ashamed and humiliated
 Who seek my life;
 Let those be turned back and dishonored
 Who delight in my hurt.
³Let those be turned back because of their shame
 Who say, “Aha, aha!”

70:1 The NASB assumes the *Qal* IMPERATIVE is used twice (cf. Ps. 22:19; 38:22; 40:13; 71:12; 141:1) and has parallel OBJECTS (cf. v. 5).

1. deliver me
2. help me

Also notice that God (*Elohim*) is parallel to LORD (YHWH), as they are in verse 5. See Special Topic at Psalm 1:1.

70:2 “Let. . .” This is the English way to denote the JUSSIVE OF REQUEST. See Contextual Insights, B.

▣ **“seek”** This VERBAL (BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* PARTICIPLE) occurs in verses 2 and 4. It describes two kinds of people.

1. those who seek to kill others to get their way
2. those who seek God

70:2-3 “Who. . .” Those who oppose the psalmist are characterized in three parallel phrases.

1. who seek my life (lit. *nephesh*)
2. who delight in my hurt
3. who say, “Aha, aha”

This last one denotes a common OT literary technique called “reversal.” What they wished to happen to the godly psalmist, happens to them!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 70:4-5

**⁴Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;
And let those who love Your salvation say continually,
“Let God be magnified.”
⁵But I am afflicted and needy;
Hasten to me, O God!
You are my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, do not delay.**

70:4 “seek You” This is an OT idiom for a personal faith relationship with God characterized by

1. temple worship
2. covenant obedience

The last line of verse 4 may be temple liturgy.

70:5 Notice that the two concepts of “deliver” and “help” of verse 1 are repeated (different but synonymous VERB for “deliver”).

▣ “I am afflicted and needy” The psalmist characterizes his own perceived situation. God is great (v. 4) but he is hurting. He entreats God to come to his aid quickly.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is Psalm 70 also found in Psalm 40:13-17?
2. Explain in your own words the literary concept of “reversal.”
3. What do the names for Deity, *Elohim* and YHWH, imply?

PSALM 71

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer of an Old Man for Deliverance <u>No MT Intro</u>	God the Rock of Salvation	An Aged Worshiper's Prayer for Deliverance from Personal Enemies	The Prayer of An Elderly Person	A Prayer of Old Age
71:1-6	71:1-3	71:1-3	71:1-3	71:1-2 71:3-4
	71:4-6	71:4-6	71:4-6	71:5-6
71:7-11	71:7-8 71:9-11	71:7-11	71:7-11	71:7-8 71:9-10 71:11-12
71:12-16	71:12-13 71:14-16	71:12-16	71:12-16	71:13 71:14-15 71:16-17
71:17-21	71:17-18 71:19-21	71:17-18e 71:18f-21	71:17-21	71:18d 71:18e-21
71:22-24	71:22-24	71:22-24	71:22-24	71:22-24

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 71:1-6

¹In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge;

Let me never be ashamed.

²In Your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;

Incline Your ear to me and save me.

³Be to me a rock of habitation to which I may continually come;

You have given commandment to save me,

For You are my rock and my fortress.

⁴Rescue me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked,

Out of the grasp of the wrongdoer and ruthless man,

⁵For You are my hope;

O Lord GOD, *You are* my confidence from my youth.

⁶By You I have been sustained from *my* birth;

You are He who took me from my mother's womb;

My praise is continually of You.

71:1-6 This opening strophe clearly reveals the mindset of the author. Notice there is no MT introduction. Most commentators assume this is a prayer of an old man (cf. vv. 9,18) who is being persecuted (cf. vv. 4,10,13,24).

71:1 “I have taken refuge” For this VERB (BDB 340, KB 337, *Qal* PERFECT), see note at Psalm 5:11.

SPECIAL TOPIC: REFUGE

“Refuge” (BDB 340, KB 337) is used of taking shelter from a storm but is often used metaphorically of shelter from evil people.

1. the VERB is used of God in Ps. 2:12; 5:11; 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 18:2; 25:20; 31:1,19; 34:8,22; 37:40; 57:1; 61:4; 64:10; 71:1; 118:8,9; 141:8; 144:2
2. the NOUN is used of God in Ps. 14:6; 46:1; 61:3; 62:7,8; 71:7; 73:28; 91:2,9; 94:22; 142:5

The imagery of protection, in all its variety, is seen in Psalm 18:1-2!

▣ **“Let me never be ashamed”** This VERB (BDB 101, KB 116) is a *Qal* COHORTATIVE. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHAME (BDB 101, KB 116) IN ITS THEOLOGICAL SENSE

“Shame” denotes the judgment of God on sin (i.e., Gen. 2:25 compared to Gen. 3:10). Note the comparison of Psalm 31:17a with 31:17b. Shame is associated with judgment in Psalm 53:5; 119:1-8,80; Dan. 12:2.

Shame is not just injury to one's reputation or pride, but a serious violation of covenant requirements and loss of fellowship with God. It is often used of idolaters (cf. Ps. 97:7; Isa. 42:17; 44:9,11; 45:16; Jer. 51:17).

The great promise of no shame for those who put their trust in YHWH (cf. Isa. 49:23; Ps. 25:3; Joel 2:27) is repeated by Paul in Rom. 9:33 and by John in 1 John 2:28.

71:2 The first two VERBS “deliver” (BDB 664, KB 717, cf. Ps. 70:1) and “rescue” (BDB 812, KB 93) are both IMPERFECTS that denote ongoing action. A third synonym “save” (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) is in verse 2b.

Notice the basis of the prayer (i.e., two *Hiphil* IMPERATIVES, v. 2b) is not the psalmist's merits but YHWH's righteousness (cf. v. 16; see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5).

▣ **“incline Your ear”** This VERB (BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) is an anthropomorphic way (see Special Topic at Ps. 2:4-6) to entreat God to hear the psalmist's prayer (cf. Ps. 17:6; 31:2; 86:1; 88:2; 102:2). The first three verses of this Psalm are similar to Psalm 31:1-3.

71:3 “Be to me a rock of habitation” The concept of God as a “high impenetrable crag” (BDB 700, i.e., fortress, cf. v. 3c) is seen in Ps. 18:2; 31:2-3; 40:2, which probably alludes to Deut. 32:31,37.

The concept of “habitation” (BDB 732) denotes a place of dwelling with God (i.e., the temple, cf. Ps. 76:2), similar to Ps. 23:6; 27:4-6; 90:1; 91:9. The prayer for deliverance is much more than just the absence of problems or enemies but the very presence of God (cf. Deut. 33:27).

It is possible that “rock of habitation/dwelling,” *מַעוֹן* could be “rock of refuge,” *מַעוֹז* (BDB 731, cf. Ps. 31:2). The UBS Text Project (p. 305) gives “dwelling” a “C” rating (considerable doubt).

▣ **“You have given commandment to save me”** The VERB (BDB 845, KB 1010, *Piel* PERFECT) is translated as

1. a past command – NASB, NKJV, NJB, REB
2. a future or present request – JPSOA

The UBS Text Project gives “to come always you have commanded” a “C” rating (i.e., considerable doubt). The NET Bible advocates the UBS's alternate option, “for a fortified house” (RSV, NRSV), following Psalm 31:2.

71:4 “Rescue me” In these first four verses several synonyms are used.

1. deliver – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 7:1; 39:9; 51:14; 71:11
2. rescue – BDB 812, KB 930, *Piel* IMPERFECT, v. 2; *Piel* IMPERATIVE, v. 4, cf. Ps. 18:48; 22:4,8; 31:1; 37:40; 43:1; 82:4; 91:14
3. save – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, v. 2; *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, v. 3; used 57 times in the Psalms.

▣ **“hand”** See Special Topic at Psalm 7:3-4

▣ **“the wicked”** See notes at Ps. 1:5; 5:10; 15:2-5. Notice the three words used here.

1. the wicked – BDB 957
2. the wrongdoer – BDB 732
3. ruthless man – BDB 330 III, KB 329

71:5-6 Notice the descriptive terms used to characterize “*Adonai* YHWH” (“my Lord LORD,” cf. v. 16).

1. my hope – BDB 876, cf. Ps. 39:7; 62:5; Jer. 14:8; 17:13
2. my confidence – BDB 105 (see Special Topic at Ps. 4:5)
3. my sustainer (lit. I have been supported) – BDB 701, KB 759, *Niphal* PERFECT, cf. Isa. 48:2

▣ **“from my youth. . .from *my* birth. . .from my mother’s womb”** These parallel phrases are an idiomatic way of asserting the psalmist’s confidence that God has always been with him and for him (cf. Ps. 22:9-10)! These are used of Israel in Isa. 46:3.

71:6

NASB, NRSV “took me from”

NKJV “took me out”

JPSOA “support”

LXX “shelter”

The MT has “cut” (BDB 159, KB 186, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), which may be figurative of God cutting the umbilical cord (i.e., intimate association with unborn child, like Ps. 22:9-10; 139:13-16; Jer. 1:5).

The other option of “from,” “pull,” or “strength/support” (LXX) involves an emendation.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 71:7-11

⁷I have become a marvel to many,

For You are my strong refuge.

⁸My mouth is filled with Your praise

And with Your glory all day long.

⁹Do not cast me off in the time of old age;

Do not forsake me when my strength fails.

¹⁰For my enemies have spoken against me;

And those who watch for my life have consulted together,

¹¹Saying, “God has forsaken him;

Pursue and seize him, for there is no one to deliver.”

71:7-11 This strophe describes the fears of an aged saint. Apparently his aged condition caused some to question God’s presence and care. In Psalms the word “deliver” (BDB 664, KB 717) is used predominately of God’s deliverance.

71:7

NASB “marvel”

NKJV “wonder”

NRSV, REB,

LXX “potent”

TEV, JPSOA “example”

NJB “bewildered”

The Hebrew word (BDB 68) means “a wonder,” “a sign,” or “a portent.” BDB sees its use here as unique, referring to “one protected by YHWH,” which would refer to verse 6.

71:8 This verse parallels the closing line of verse 6. This person’s life was characterized by “praise” (BDB 239, cf. v. 14; Ps. 34:1).

71:9 Even though this is a person of faith and praise, old age and the words of his adversaries had caused him to fear and fret (cf. v. 18).

This fear is expressed in two IMPERFECTS used as JUSSIVES.

1. do not cast me off – BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 51:11
2. do not forsake me – BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* IMPERFECT

71:10-11 These verses express what the psalmist's enemies are saying (or at least his perception of their thoughts).

1. God has forsaken him – BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* PERFECT (permanent situation of rejection)
2. pursue him – BDB 922, KB 1191, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. seize him – BDB 1074, KB 1779, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. for there is no one to deliver him – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE

Psalm 3:2 also describes the evil sayings of those who attack God's faithful followers with doubt.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 71:12-16

¹²O God, do not be far from me;

O my God, hasten to my help!

¹³Let those who are adversaries of my soul be ashamed *and* consumed;

Let them be covered with reproach and dishonor, who seek to injure me.

¹⁴But as for me, I will hope continually,

And will praise You yet more and more.

¹⁵My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness

***And* of Your salvation all day long;**

For I do not know the sum *of them*.

¹⁶I will come with the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD;

I will make mention of Your righteousness, Yours alone.

71:12-16 This strophe has three aspects.

1. the psalmist's prayer for, v. 12
 - a. God's presence (lit. "be not far from me") – BDB 934, KB 1221, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 22:11,19
 - b. God's quick help – BDB 301, KB 300, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. the psalmist's prayers for his enemies' demise, v. 13
 - a. be ashamed – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - b. be consumed – BDB 477, KB 476, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - c. be covered with reproach – BDB 741, KB 813, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - d. be covered with dishonor – same VERB assumed from c.
3. the psalmist's steadfast faith, vv. 14-16
 - a. I will hope continually
 - b. I will praise. . . more and more
 - c. I will tell (i.e., in the temple)
 - (1) of Your righteousness
 - (2) of Your salvation
 - (3) of Your mighty deeds
 - (4) of Your righteousness, Yours alone (see Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7)

71:13 “adversaries” This is a PARTICIPLE (“the ones accusing,” BDB 966, KB 1316) of the term often used of Satan, the arch accuser. See Special Topic at ps. 38:20.

71:15 “my mouth will tell” This VERB (BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is often used in Psalms of proclaiming YHWH’s character and deeds in a worship setting (i.e., temple).

1. His wonders – Ps. 9:1; 26:7; 40:5; 75:1; 78:4
2. His praise – Ps. 9:14; 79:13; 107:21
3. His acts – Ps. 66:16; 118:17; 145:6,12
4. His righteousness – Ps. 71:5 (cf. 35:28; 40:10)
5. His covenant love and faithfulness – Ps. 88:11 (cf. 40:10)
6. His glory – Ps. 19:1; 96:3 (cf. 145:12)
7. His greatness – Ps. 145:6
8. His Messiah – Ps. 2:7
9. His name – Ps. 22:22; 102:21

Here in this verse – His righteousness and His salvation.

▣ **“For I do not know the sum of them”** This phrase may reflect

1. the same truth as Ps. 40:5; 139:18, that God’s marvelous acts are too numerous to be comprehended
2. the same truth as Job 42:3; Ps. 139:6, that they are beyond human understanding
3. that it means “write” as opposed to “tell” (NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 1288)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 71:17-21

- ¹⁷O God, You have taught me from my youth,
And I still declare Your wondrous deeds.
- ¹⁸And even when *I am* old and gray, O God, do not forsake me,
Until I declare Your strength to *this* generation,
Your power to all who are to come.
- ¹⁹For Your righteousness, O God, *reaches* to the heavens,
You who have done great things;
O God, who is like You?
- ²⁰You who have shown me many troubles and distresses
Will revive me again,
And will bring me up again from the depths of the earth.
- ²¹May You increase my greatness
And turn *to* comfort me.

71:17-21 This strophe continues the central themes of the psalm. It expresses the psalmist’s declaration of God’s character and the certainty of His mercy. Because of this he will continually tell of God’s greatness (i.e., in a temple setting).

71:17a The Israelites were instructed by Moses to teach their children about God (cf. Exod. 10:12; 12:26; 13:8,14; Deut. 4:9; 6:7,20-25; 11:19; 31:13; 32:46). Effective faith makes the faith of the next generation a priority!

71:17b “wondrous deeds” See Special Topic at Ps. 9:1.

71:18 Line 1 is a repeat of verse 9. Notice that the psalmist senses his message about God will help his generation and generations to come. This is what Scripture is designed to do!

71:19 “reaches to the heavens” This is an idiom denoting the creative and redemptive acts of God which are so great and significant they reach the clouds (cf. Ps. 57:10).

▣ **“who is like You?”** This is a reference to YHWH’s uniqueness in a world of polytheism, henotheism, and animism (see Special Topic: Monotheism at Ps. 2:7). This is the essence of Israel’s exclusivism!

71:20 This is an admission (in OT terms) of the problems all humans face in this fallen world. The theology of the “two ways” (cf. Psalm 1; Deut. 30:15,19) does not explain life (cf. Psalm 37; 73; and Job).

▣ **“revive. . .bring up”** These seem to be idioms of restoration to a vigorous life, not of resurrection. The OT does assert an afterlife (cf. Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27; Dan. 12:2), but the context here does not hint of this concept.

▣ **“me”** It is possible that the PLURAL “us” should be in the text. If so, this is another example of a corporate conclusion to an individual Psalm. It would then parallel Ezekiel 37 (i.e., national revitalization).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 71:22-24

²²**I will also praise You with a harp,**

Even Your truth, O my God;

To You I will sing praises with the lyre,

O Holy One of Israel.

²³**My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to You;**

And my soul, which You have redeemed.

²⁴**My tongue also will utter Your righteousness all day long;**

For they are ashamed, for they are humiliated who seek my hurt.

71:22-24 The psalmist may have been a Levitical singer (cf. v. 22). He praises God for His faithfulness/truth (BDB 54, see Special Topic at Ps. 12:1), but also for the shame and humiliation He brought on his enemies (v. 24).

▣ **“Holy One of Israel”** This is a covenant title for YHWH (cf. Ps. 78:41; 89:18; so often in Isaiah, i.e., 1:4; 5:24). See Special Topic: Holy at Ps. 16:3.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is this Psalm believed to be written by an older person?
2. How is verse 3 related to Psalm 23:6?
3. How are verses 5-6 related to Jeremiah 1:5?
4. Define the word “marvel” in verse 7.
5. Define “ashamed” in verse 13.
6. Does verse 19c teach monotheism?
7. Is verse 20 referring to healing, restoration of vitality, or resurrection?

PSALM 72

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Reign of the Righteous King <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of Solomon	Glory and Universality of the Messiah's Reign	Prayer for God's Blessing On the King	A Prayer for A King	The Promised King
72:1-4	72:1-4	72:1-4	72:1-5	72:1-2 71:3-4
72:5-7	72:5-7	72:5-7	72:6-7	72:5-6 72:7-8
72:8-11	72:8-11	72:8-11	72:8-11	72:9-10b 72:10c-11
72:12-15	72:12-15	72:12-14 72:15-17	72:12-14 72:15-17	72:12-13 72:14-15
72:16-17	72:16 72:17			72:16 72:17
72:18-19	72:18-19	72:18-19	72:18-19b 72:19c	72:18-19
72:20	72:20	72:20	72:20	72:20

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is an extended prayer (i.e., “Give” – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) for a righteous king and his son (possibly an allusion to 2 Samuel 7, which ultimately refers to the Messiah).
1. Your judgments – NASB, NKJV, JPSOA
– your justice – NRSV, REB,
– your own fair judgment – NJB
 2. Your righteousness – NASB, NKJV, NRSV, JPSOA, REB
– your own saving justice, NJB
- B. This Psalm captures the OT understanding of the “New Age.” The covenant requirements and promises come to fruition. If it is a coronation hymn, it is royal hyperbole, but if it is imagery of the new age, it finds fulfillment in Christ. This Psalm is not quoted in the NT but Jewish and Christian sources have seen it as Messianic. See Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Appendix IX, p. 719.
- C. This Psalm is dominated by IMPERFECT VERBS. The NASB, NRSV, and JPSOA see verses 2-4, 5-7, 8-11, 15-17, 19 as IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense (i.e., “may. . .,” “let. . .”), but NKJV and NJB see them all as IMPERFECTS (i.e., statements of what the Messiah will do). There are four JUSSIVES in this context (i.e., vv., 8, 15, 16, 17).
- D. Verse 20 is a concluding remark by a later editor/compiler of Book Two (i.e., Psalm 42-72) of the Psalter.

It is also possible that verses 18-19 comprise a closing doxology to Book Two of the Psalter.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 72:1-4

- ¹Give the king Your judgments, O God,
And Your righteousness to the king's son.
²May he judge Your people with righteousness
And Your afflicted with justice.
³Let the mountains bring peace to the people,
And the hills, in righteousness.
⁴May he vindicate the afflicted of the people,
Save the children of the needy
And crush the oppressor.

72:1-4 This strophe prays for the godly manner in which the new king (i.e., Messiah) should reign.

1. judge (PLURAL in MT possible, expresses quality) with righteousness, cf. Isa. 9:7; 11:2-5; 32:1; for “righteousness” see Special Topic at Ps. 1:5
2. judge with justice (see Special Topic at Ps. 9:5-6), cf. Ps. 82:3
3. bring peace (the righteous king's reign will cause the land to prosper, i.e., Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30)
4. vindicate, cf. Isa. 11:4
5. save
6. crush the oppressor

Notice the different terms used to describe God's people.

1. Your people, v. 2
2. Your afflicted, vv. 2,4 (JPSOA, "lowly ones")
3. the children of the needy, v. 4

All of God's family will be protected and encouraged.

There developed a tension within the covenant community between the rich and poor. This tension was transferred after the exiles to believing, faithful followers and the pagan invaders/occupiers. It is the afflicted/poor/needy who will be restored. YHWH will care for and defend them (development of Deuteronomy themes). He is their only hope and savior (cf. Ps. 103:6; 146:7).

72:3 This imagery can have several meanings.

1. mountains. . hills refer to godly leaders
2. mountains. . hills are functioning as personified messengers of prosperity (i.e., covenant blessings)
3. mountains. . hills refer to the permanent stability of the Promised Land

▣ **"water"** This word (BDB 284, KB 283) is found only here in the OT. It seems to be from the *Hiphil* VERB "dripping"; in Arabic the root means "tears flow."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 72:5-7

⁵Let them fear You while the sun *endures*,
And as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
⁶May he come down like rain upon the mown grass,
Like showers that water the earth.
⁷In his days may the righteous flourish,
And abundance of peace till the moon is no more.

72:5-7 This strophe emphasizes two requests.

1. that God's people continue to fear/revere Him
2. that this devotion continue through time (i.e., while the sun and moon endure, cf. Gen. 8:22; Ps. 89:36-37)

If they do, then the promises of abundance from the Mosaic covenant will continue (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30). The king and the people (cf. Ps. 1:9; 2:12) must meet the covenant conditions.

72:5

NASB, JPSOA "them"

NKJV "they"

NRSV, NJB,

REV, LXX "he"

The MT has the PLURAL, therefore, it could refer to

1. the covenant people's reverence
2. the Messianic king's (i.e., the PLURAL OF MAJESTY) reverence



NASB, NKJV,

REB, JPSOA "fear"

NRSV, NEB "live"

TEV “worship”

NJB, LXX “endure”

The UBS Text Project (p. 309) gives “last” a “C” rating (considerable doubt). This follows the LXX. It fits the parallelism better.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 72:8-11

⁸May he also rule from sea to sea

And from the River to the ends of the earth.

⁹Let the nomads of the desert bow before him,

And his enemies lick the dust.

¹⁰Let the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring presents;

The kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts.

¹¹And let all kings bow down before him,

All nations serve him.

72:8-11 The reign of the Messiah will be

1. universal (i.e., using terms from the ANE)
 - a. from sea to sea (cf. Zech. 9:10)
 - b. from the river (i.e., Euphrates) to the ends of the earth (i.e., Solomon ruled this area)
2. all peoples will honor Him and bring tribute, cf. Isa. 49:23

This universal reign (cf. Ps. 2:8; 59:13; 65:2; 67:7; Isa. 45:22; 52:10; Micah 5:4) is the obvious conclusion from Gen. 1:26-27 and 12:3. If monotheism is true, the redemption of all the children of Adam is the goal (see Special Topic at Psalm 2 Introduction; Psalm 2 is another Messianic Psalm).

72:9

NASB “the nomads”

NKJV (MT) “those who dwell in the wilderness”

NRSV “foes”

TEV “peoples of the desert”

NJB “beasts”

LXX “Ethiopians”

REB “desert tribes”

The word (צִי, BDB 850 II, KB 1020) can mean

1. foes from צָר, BDB 865 III (emendation, but fits the parallel “enemies” of v. 9b better)
2. desert animals – Ps. 74:14; Isa. 13:21; 23:13; 34:14; Jer. 50:39 (from יָיָה, “dryness,” cf. Jer. 50:12; 51:43)
3. it is possible (cf. NEB) that #2 refers to desert demons (see Special Topic below)
4. envoy or messenger – צִיר (BDB 851 II), cf. Isa. 18:2

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- A. The exact relationship between fallen angels and the demonic is uncertain. I Enoch asserts that the *Nephilim* of Gen. 6:1-8 is the source of evil (the rabbis also focus on the text and not Genesis 3). I Enoch says that these half angel/half human beings were killed by the flood (it even asserts

that their death was the purpose of the flood), but now their disembodied spirits are seeking a body host.

B. There are several hostile spirits or demons named in the OT.

1. *Satyrs* or “hairy ones,” possibly goat demons (BDB 972 III) – Lev. 17:7; 2 Chr. 11:15; Isa. 13:21; 34:14
2. *Shedim* (BDB 993) – Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37, to which sacrifices were made (similar to *Molech*)
3. *Lilith*, the female night demon (BDB 539) – Isa. 34:14 (part of Babylonian and Ugarit myth)
4. *Azazel*, demon of the desert (name of chief demon in I Enoch, cf. 8:1; 9:6; 10:4-8; 13:1-2; 54:5; 55:4; 69:2) – Lev. 16:8,10,26
5. Psalm 91:5-6 are personifications of pestilence (cf. v. 10), not spiritual beings (cf. Song of Songs 3:8)
6. Isaiah 13:21 and 34:14 list several desert animals as a way to show the desolation of destroyed places. Some who assume that the list includes the demonic to illustrate that these destroyed places are also haunted (cf. Matt. 12:43; Luke 11:24; Rev. 18:2)

C. The OT monotheism silenced and modified the legends of the pagan nations, but sometimes names and titles of their superstitions are referred to (esp. poetic texts). The reality of evil spirits is a part of progressive revelation and is developed in the NT as is the person/angel of Satan.

▣ **“his enemies lick the dust”** This is an ANE picture (i.e., wall carving and paintings) of someone bowing (cf. v. 9a) to the ground. To this was added a literary idiom of “lick the dust” (BDB 535, KB 525, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. Isa. 49:23; Micah 7:17), which denoted the defeat and subservience of the one bowing.

72:10 “Tarshish” This place name (BDB 1077) could refer to

1. a city in southern Spain on the Atlantic side, which was a Phoenician colony (i.e., Tartessus, verse 7)
2. the island of Sardinia (cf. Gen. 10:4)
3. a city on the north African coast (Carthage was a colony of Phoenicia)
4. a metaphor for a far distant port
5. a type of large sea-going commercial ship
6. a rival maritime nation (cf. 1 Kgs. 10:22)

▣ **“islands”** This word (BDB 15 I) usually means “coast” or “island.” It denotes far away nations (cf. Isa. 40:15; 66:19; Jer. 25:22; 31:10). This fits the imagery of this strophe (i.e., the universal reign of the Messiah).

▣ **“Sheba”** This refers to the nation or tribe from Ham living in southern Arabia.

▣ **“Seba”** This refers to the area of northeast Africa, often identified with Egypt and Cush (cf. Isa. 43:3; 45:14).

The purpose of mentioning these place names is to back up the assertion of verses 8 and 11.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 72:12-15

¹²**For he will deliver the needy when he cries for help,
The afflicted also, and him who has no helper.**

¹³**He will have compassion on the poor and needy,
And the lives of the needy he will save.**

¹⁴**He will rescue their life from oppression and violence,
And their blood will be precious in his sight;**

¹⁵**So may he live, and may the gold of Sheba be given to him;
And let them pray for him continually;
Let them bless him all day long.**

72:12-15 In verses 12-14 the IMPERFECTS characterize the Messiah's reign (not used in a JUSSIVE sense). However, in verse 15 the NASB returns to IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense.

Notice the variety in the names and characterizations of God's people (cf. vv. 2-4).

1. the needy, v. 12
2. the afflicted, v. 12
3. the poor, v. 13
4. the needy, v. 13

As verse 4 named their enemies "the oppressor," here they are described as "oppressors" and "those of violence." It is difficult to identify these people in Psalms.

1. unfaithful Israelites
2. pagan neighbors
3. foreign invaders

The Messianic king will

1. deliver the needy and afflicted
2. have compassion on the poor and needy
3. save the lives of the needy (cf. Ps. 69:18)
4. rescue the covenant people from oppression and violence
5. their blood/lives are precious in His sight (cf. Ps. 116:15)

72:14 "their blood will be precious in his sight" The Messiah is contrasted with "the oppressor" (cf. v. 4). He will genuinely care for the poor, needy, and afflicted (cf. Ps. 116:15). He has the heart of the Creator (cf. Gen. 1:26,27)! All humans are important to Him!

72:15 This verse has two thrusts.

1. the first two VERBS relate to the Messianic king
 - a. may he live – BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* JUSSIVE
 - b. may he be given tribute – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. the next two VERBS relate to His people
 - a. let them pray for Him continually – BDB 813, KB 933, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - b. let them bless Him all day long – BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

It is obvious that verse 15a is using a common royal expression (i.e., "long live the king"), but it takes on new meaning in light of NT revelation of the Messiah's incarnation and triumphal entry into Jerusalem!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 72:16-17

¹⁶May there be abundance of grain in the earth on top of the mountains;
Its fruit will wave like *the cedars of Lebanon*;
And may those from the city flourish like vegetation of the earth.
¹⁷May his name endure forever;
May his name increase as long as the sun *shines*;
And let *men* bless themselves by him;
Let all nations call him blessed.

72:16-17 Both verse 16 and verse 17 start with a JUSSIVE VERB, which gives a context to see all the IMPERFECT VERBS in these two verses as JUSSIVE in meaning.

This strophe continues the abundance theme begun in verses 3,5-6. This abundance is the covenantal promises of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30.

Verse 17 focuses on the Messiah's reign.

1. may His name endure forever – used of YHWH in Ps. 135:13
2. may His name increase as long as the sun shines (cf. 72:5-7); the VERB “increase” is found only here in the OT (BDB 630, KB 696, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1161); the LXX has “endure” in the parallel of verse 17a
3. let men bless themselves by Him (i.e., an allusion to Gen. 12:3; 22:18; the Abrahamic covenant, see Special Topic at Psalm 2 Introduction
4. let all the nations call Him blessed (parallel to #3)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 72:18-19

¹⁸Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who alone works wonders.
¹⁹And blessed be His glorious name forever;
And may the whole earth be filled with His glory.
Amen, and Amen.

72:18-19 Notice how verse 17 (about the Messiah) is paralleled in verse 18 (about the covenant God of Israel). The king, as well as the Messiah, is to reflect the character of YHWH.

Notice the universal element again in verse 19b (cf. Num. 14:21; Isa. 6:3).

72:18 “works wonders” See Special Topic at Psalm 9:1.

72:19 “Amen” See Special Topic at Psalm 41:13.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 72:20

²⁰The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

72:20 This verse is an editorial note showing the close of the second book of Psalms. It is possible that verses 18-19 are also a doxological close (cf. 41:13; 89:52) to the whole second book.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpreting. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is this Psalm about Solomon or the future Messiah?
2. Did Solomon's reign fit verse 8?
3. How do these OT Scriptures about Israel's dominance of all nations fit with the NT?
4. Who do the "afflicted" represent?
5. How is verse 16 related to Genesis 12?
6. Are verses 18-19,20 a part of this Psalm or a close to Book II?

PSALM 73

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The End of the Wicked Contrasted with that of the Righteous <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of Asaph	The Tragedy of the Wicked, and the Blessedness of Trust in God	Meditation on the Justice of God	The Justice of God	The Triumph of Justice
73:1-9	73:1-3	73:1-3	73:1-3	73:1
				73:2-3
	73:4-9	73:4-9	73:4-14	73:4-5
				73:6-7
				73:8-9
73:10-14	73:10-14	73:10-14		73:10-12
				73:13
				73:14-15
73:15-20	73:15-17	73:15-20	73:15-17	
				73:16-18
	73:18-20		73:18-20	
				73:19-20
73:21-24	73:21-24	73:21-26	73:21-26	73:21-22
				73:23-24
73:25-28	73:25-26			73:25-26
	73:27-28	73:27-28	73:27-28	73:27-28

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Asaph is one of the Levitical choir directors under David (cf. 1 Chr. 25:1-9).
- B. This Psalm speaks to the apparent unfairness of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous. It treats the problem by projecting the justice of God into a future afterlife.
- C. The Psalm develops and expands the traditional view (“the two ways”) concerning life; compare Deuteronomy 27-28; 30:15-20; Psalm 1; Pro. 4:10-18; Matt. 7:13-14. Life is unfair but God will set it straight!
- D. The book of Job and Psalm 37 deal with the same problem, but in this life; Psalm 73 deals with it in light of Matthew 25.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 73:1-9

- ¹**Surely God is good to Israel,
To those who are pure in heart!**
- ²**But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling,
My steps had almost slipped.**
- ³**For I was envious of the arrogant
As I saw the prosperity of the wicked.**
- ⁴**For there are no pains in their death,
And their body is fat.**
- ⁵**They are not in trouble *as other* men,
Nor are they plagued like mankind.**
- ⁶**Therefore pride is their necklace;
The garment of violence covers them.**
- ⁷**Their eye bulges from fatness;
The imaginations of *their* heart run riot.**
- ⁸**They mock and wickedly speak of oppression;
They speak from on high.**
- ⁹**They have set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue parades through the earth.**

73:1 “Surely God is good to Israel” “Good” (BDB 373 II, #9) means “kind to” (cf. Ps. 86:5; 145:9; Lam. 3:25). This is the conclusion of the Psalm and the basic assumption of the OT but not every person in Israel is of faith (cf. Romans 9-11). The same can be said of the church (cf. Matthew 7; 13). The unusual phrase of Ps. 73:15 may reflect a true, faithful Israel.

Notice the added connotations of God’s “goodness.”

1. He is good to all (cf. Ps. 145:9)
2. His goodness is primarily bestowed on those who call upon Him (cf. Ps. 86:5)
3. He is good, Himself (cf. Ezra 3:11; Ps. 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1,29; 136:1; Jer. 33:11; Nah. 1:7)

Israel's blessing is based on

1. God's eternal redemptive purpose in the seed of Abraham (see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan)
2. the faith relationship and covenant obedience of His followers
3. short term physical blessings do not compare (cf. Rom. 8:18-25) with long term, personal relationship (cf. Rom. 8:26-30,31-39)! Be sure to take the long look! Immediate circumstances can be deceiving!

▣ **“to Israel”** The NRSV and REB, as well as the Catholic version NAB, change “to Israel,” לִישְׂרָאֵל (BDB 975) to “for God's upright one,” אֱלֹהִים (BDB 449 plus BDB 42 II, #6).

▣ **“pure in heart”** This reflects one's attitudes and motives (cf. Ps. 24:4-5; 51:10; Matt. 5:8).

73:2

NASB “close”

NKJV, NRSV,

JPSOA “almost”

TEV “nearly”

NJB “on the point of”

This reflects the Hebrew ADVERB BDB 589. It clearly states the seriousness of the psalmist's faith crisis! He was on the very verge of losing his confidence, trust, assurance, and peace with God. Faith crises are potentially

1. a devastating loss of hope
2. a source of strength and growth

We all know people who have experienced one or the other!

▣ **“stumbling. . .slipped”** This is a biblical metaphor of lifestyle. The straight, stable path was righteousness (cf. Ps. 40:2), but the crooked, slippery path was wickedness (cf. Ps. 73:18; Pro. 3:23). The two options in life are what is called “the two ways” (i.e., Psalm 1 and Deut. 30:15-20).

The term translated “slipped” is literally “poured out” (BDB 1049, KB 1629, *Qal* PASSIVE PERFECT). Only here does it have the connotation (demanded by the parallel poetic line, “stumbling”) of slipping on a wet surface.

Psalm 73:3 clarifies the problem area (i.e., envy, jealousy).

73:3 “I was envious of the arrogant. . .the prosperity of the wicked” This world is unfair. If this world is all there is, God is unfair!

The “pure in heart” of Ps. 73:1 are being tested by the unfairness of life. The underlying assumption is that God allows that which should be judged! See Special Topic: God Tests His People.

73:4-9 These verses describe the lifestyle of the people mentioned in Ps. 73:3 (i.e., the arrogant and prosperous, wicked people of the covenant community).

1. no pain in their death
2. well fed, Ps. 73:4b, 7a
3. no outward trouble
4. show off the pride, Ps. 73:6a, 8b
5. act in violence without judgment
6. evil thinking and slander
7. flaunt their evil deeds, even before God, Ps. 73:11

From OT theology (i.e., Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30) prosperity was a blessing from God for faith and obedience (cf. Ps. 73:10), but these people made a mockery of those texts!

73:4 “there are no pains in their death” This means (1) they had an honorable funeral or (2) their death was quick and painless.

▣ **“pains”** This Hebrew word (BDB 359) is used only twice in the OT, in very different senses.

1. “fetters” or “bonds” – Isa. 58:6 (SINGULAR)
2. “pains” – Ps. 73:4 (PLURAL)

The NET bible suggests:

“It is used metaphorically of pain and suffering that restricts one’s enjoyment of life” (p. 941).

The Tyndale Commentary by Derek Kidner (p. 289, footnote #2) agrees with the RSV, which changes “in their death,” למותם, into two words, למו תם, which results in “no pains for them, sound and sleek in their body.” This is followed by NRSV and REB.

▣ **“their body is fat”** They did not seemingly experience disease or the normal problems of life (i.e., a healthy body; the Hebrew term [BDB 17 I]) is found only here.

73:5

NASB, NKJV “They are not in trouble *as other men*”

NJB “exempt from the cares which are the human lot”

JPSOA “They have no part in the travail of men”

The wicked seem to be spared the normal problems of life. This, at first, seems to be an act of God. This is the theological problem connected to “the two ways” (cf. Job; Psalm 73).

▣ **“plagued”** This term (BDB 619, KB 668, *Pual* IMPERFECT) is often used of divine punishment (cf. Gen. 12:17; 2 Kgs. 15:5; 2 Chr. 26:20; Isa. 26:5; Job 1:11; 2:5). It seemed God’s own words (i.e., Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30; Psalm 1) about the wicked had failed. In Ps. 73:14 the same word is used for the mental anguish of the psalmist, caused by his own doubts.

73:6 Because of their life experiences (Ps. 73:4-5) the arrogant, wealthy, healthy, covenant violators live openly, even flauntingly, their godless lives (Ps. 73:6-9).

73:7

NASB “their eye bulges from fatness”

TEV “their hearts pour out evil”

NJB “from their fat oozes out malice”

LXX “Their injustice will go forth as though from fat”

Peshitta “Their iniquity comes through like grease”

JPSOA “Fat shuts out their eyes”

The idea of “iniquity” is the translation from the LXX, Syriac, Peshitta, and Vulgate. The UBS Text Project (p. 314) gives “their eyes” a “C” rating (i.e., considerable doubt).

“iniquity” is עוֹבְדָּם

“their eyes” is עֵינֵיהֶם

“Eyes” fits the context and parallelism of Ps. 73:7 best.

73:8 “mock” This apparently Aramaic term (BDB 558, KB 559) occurs only here in the OT.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 73:10-14

¹⁰Therefore his people return to this place,
And waters of abundance are drunk by them.

¹¹They say, “How does God know?
And is there knowledge with the Most High?”

¹²Behold, these are the wicked;
And always at ease, they have increased *in* wealth.

¹³Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
And washed my hands in innocence;

¹⁴For I have been stricken all day long
And chastened every morning.

73:10 This verse is uncertain in the MT. The flow of the context implies

1. the wicked people have negatively affected other covenant people (The Catholic Tradition CCD thinks Ps. 73:10 was a quote from the wicked Israelites)
2. the wicked consume every good thing they can
3. the followers of the wicked believe everything they say (NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 1065)

Basically this is the psalmist’s dilemma. He sees the arrogant, blasphemous, covenant person receiving all the covenant’s benefits and abundance! This is why he asks the question of Ps. 73:13! The “if. . .then” of the Mosaic covenant (i.e., Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30) seems to be of no effect. The world seems “upside down.”

The AB, followed by the NET Bible, suggests an emendation to the first line. They change “he will bring back his people” (MT) to “they will be filled with food,” which seems to be a better parallel to the next line.

73:11 “How does God know?” The wicked show open arrogance and blasphemy toward YHWH (cf. Ps. 73:9).

The Jewish Study Bible has an interesting quote (p. 1362).

“There was no atheism in ancient times, only the notion that God lacked knowledge and power” (cf. Ps. 10:4,11,13; 94:7).

This assertion of the lack of foreknowledge has reappeared in modern theology of “Open Theism.” I personally think this theology has taken an OT literary technique (i.e., God asking questions, cf. Gen. 3:9) and used it as a grid to filter all Bible texts. It is a modified form of “Progressive Theism” from Alfred North Whitehead.

▣ **“Most High”** This is the Hebrew title *Elyon* (see Special Topic: Names For Deity). It is used in Genesis 14 (i.e., Melchizedek’s name for Deity) four times and twenty-one times in the Psalter, but only six times in all the rest of the OT.

73:13 “Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure” This reflects the psalmist’s doubt about the goodness and fairness of God mixed with a “poor me” attitude. This almost reflects the “what’s in it for me” attitude of Job 1:6-12.

This is theologically similar to Satan’s accusations against Job that he only served God because of God’s blessings and protection (i.e., faith for favors).

The “two ways” of the OT seem to have been reversed! This is where “faithful followers” must remember we live in a fallen world. This is not the world God intended it to be. The purpose of the OT was to show humanity their rebellion and sin (cf. Galatians 3)!

Godliness and faithfulness bring reproach and rejection in a fallen world (cf. Matt. 5:10-16), but there is a new day coming (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38).

▣ **“surely”** This ADVERB (BDB 36), used of “doubt” in Ps. 73:13, becomes an affirmation in Ps. 73:18! The psalmist had not lived a righteous life in vain and the wicked will reap what they have sowed (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19, for a full list of NT texts cf. Gal. 6:7 online).

▣ **“washed my hands in innocense”** This translation is surely possible, based on

1. the MT intro to Psalm 73
2. this Levitical imagery
3. the sacrificial term “portion” in Ps. 73:26

The author may have been a Levite or priest. Hand washing was part of the rituals of the temple.

However, the idiom takes on the wider connotation of “godly living” (cf. Deut. 21:6; Ps. 26:6); also note the idiom in Gen. 20:5.

73:14 There is a parallel between “all day long” and “every morning,” both of which are idioms for an extended period of time (i.e., a lifetime). The psalmist is claiming a life of faithfulness.

The PASSIVE VOICE of the phrase “I have been stricken” (BDB 224, K 243, *Qal* IMPERFECT combined with BDB 619, KB 668, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) implies that not only has God allowed or overlooked the wicked’s actions and motives, but has done to the faithful psalmist what should have been done to the arrogant, blasphemous, unfaithful covenant partners! This is the mystery of events in a fallen world. This is not the world God intended it to be. Things happen that are not from God. In the OT, to support monotheism, there is only one causality (cf. Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6) but from further revelation we know that is not the case. God has allowed His beloved creation to reap the terrible consequences of Genesis

3. The good news is

1. He will fix it eventually (i.e., New Age)
2. He is with us in the midst of it (cf. Psalm 23)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 73:15-20

¹⁵If I had said, “I will speak thus,”

Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children.

¹⁶When I pondered to understand this,

It was troublesome in my sight

¹⁷Until I came into the sanctuary of God;

Then I perceived their end.

¹⁸Surely You set them in slippery places;

You cast them down to destruction.

¹⁹How they are destroyed in a moment!

They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!

²⁰Like a dream when one awakes,

O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form.

73:15-20 This strophe is the theological heart of this Psalm. Notice the main points.

1. Faithful followers openly expressing their doubt and confusion can affect other believers.
2. A place and time of fellowship with God can bring peace to our confusion.
3. The wicked's prosperity is fleeting and their time of confrontation with God will surely come (cf. Ps. 73:27).

This is an affirmation that the “two ways” still have validity! We do reap what we sow!

73:16 “When I pondered to understand this” Our ability to understand the ways of God through fallen, worldly, time-bound human intellect is doomed to failure (cf. Pro. 3:5b; Isa. 55:8-13; Col. 2:8). Knowledge is good but trust is better!

73:17 “Until I came into the sanctuary” The word “sanctuary” (BDB 874) is PLURAL, which would denote the entire temple compound or the PLURAL OF MAJESTY. Worship helped the psalmist see clearly. Possibly he had neglected this during his struggle.

▣ **“I perceived their end”** Revelation came and his eyes were opened to the big picture—he took the long look, both in time and beyond time.

73:18-20 The result of rebellion is not only a fearful death but also a dreadful eternity (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 20:11-15).

73:19 The term “terrors” (BDB 117) can refer to death (cf. Job 18:11,14). The AB in Psalms by Mitchell Dahood finds many Hebrew words and idioms that, because of Ugaritic usage may be imagery for the nether world.

73:20 “when aroused” The PREPOSITION and VERB (בעיר, BDB 734, KB 802, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) has been emended (LXX, Peshitta, Vulgate) to “city” (עיר, BDB 746 II). This would refer to

1. “the city of phantoms” (AB, i.e., *Sheol*)
2. a reference to Jerusalem (i.e., they are excluded from God's presence by sin and/or exile)

The concept of God awakening from sleep or rising from His throne to act is used in the OT as figurative language to denote the mystery of Deity's apparent inactivity or/and the unfairness of worldly events. God has revealed Himself but why are His promises and human conditions so different?



NASB “form

NKJC, NJB,

JPSOA “image”

NRSV, LXX “phantoms”

Peshitta “idolatry”

This word (BDB 853) occurs only twice in the OT (cf. here and Ps. 39:6). NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 810, suggests it denotes an image or shadow. It possibly comes from an ANE root for “dark,” “black” (another form would be “the valley of the shadow of death,” cf. Ps. 23:4).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 73:21-24

²¹When my heart was embittered

And I was pierced within,

²²Then I was senseless and ignorant;

I was *like* a beast before You.

**²³Nevertheless I am continually with You;
You have taken hold of my right hand.**

**²⁴With Your counsel You will guide me,
And afterward receive me to glory.**

73:21 “within” This is literally “kidneys” (BDB 480). The Hebrews referred to the lower viscera as the seat of the emotions (cf. Job 19:27; Pro. 23:16) and mental activity (cf. Ps. 16:7).

73:22 Animals have no moral sense. It is humans who are created in the image and likeness of God (i.e., Gen. 1:26-27). Only they have a moral sense. The knowledge of the Tree of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden accentuated this moral dilemma (cf. Gen. 3:8-13). To call someone “brutish” means they have no moral compass or direction and simply live like animals (i.e., to meet their immediate needs or wants). The psalmist felt his doubts and jealousy had made him act like one who did not know God (i.e., Ps. 73:21-22). All humans go through these times of “less than appropriate” feelings. True believers emerge from these times stronger and surer of God’s great mercy and presence! Inappropriate attitudes can be stepping stones to greater faith!

73:23-24 The blessings of God are:

1. His presence in our lives (cf. Ps. 73:28a)
2. His daily guidance (i.e., holds the psalmist’s “right hand”)
3. His acceptance now
4. His acceptance eternally (see note at Ps. 73:24)

When faith looks backward it clearly sees the hand of God. Past faithfulness and mercy give the faithful follower hope and confidence in the future presence and promises of God!

73:24 Interpreters must be careful not to assume NT revelation into ambiguous OT texts. There are OT texts that point toward a future hope of physical life with God. This text, however, may not be one of them.

1. the word “glory” (BDB 458) does not refer to heaven in any other place in the OT (see UBS *Handbook*, p. 642; IVP Background Commentary, p. 540)
2. the PREPOSITION “to” is not in the text (there is no PREPOSITION). The LXX supplies “with.”
3. “glory” may refer to “honor” (cf. JPSOA, NRSV, Peshitta) that seemed to be with the wicked, but in reality, was with the psalmist

On the other hand

1. the VERB “receive” (BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used of Enoch in Gen. 5:24, who was translated into God’s presence, as was Elijah (cf. 2 Kgs. 2:3,10-11)
2. the ADVERB “afterward” (BDB 29) occurs in Ps. 73:24, which seems to denote a concluding event
3. “heaven” (BDB 1029, see two Special Topic: Heaven and Special Topic: Heaven and the Third Heaven) is mentioned in Ps. 73:25
4. the term “forever” is used in Ps. 73:26 in contrast to “those who are far from You will perish”

The hope of all faithful followers is that they will be with God forever (cf. Ps. 23:6; 27:4-6). It is not a “where” question but a “who” question! Humans were created for fellowship with God; nothing else will do!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 73:25-28

²⁵Whom have I in heaven *but* You?

And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.

²⁶**My flesh and my heart may fail,**

But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

²⁷**For, behold, those who are far from You will perish;**

You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.

²⁸**But as for me, the nearness of God is my good;**

I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,

That I may tell of all Your works.

73:25 “besides You, I desire nothing on earth” God Himself is our greatest need! We were created for fellowship with Him (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8).

It is possible that this phrase is an affirmation of covenant loyalty to the one true God. The psalmist is asserting that he never participated in idolatry (“act as a harlot,” i.e., idolatry, Ps. 73:27).

73:26 “God is the strength” His changelessness is our hope (cf. Ps. 18:1-3; Mal. 3:6).

▣ **“my portion forever”** God Himself was the inheritance of the Levites (cf. Deut. 10:9; 12:12; 14:27,29; 18:1; Ps. 16:5; Lam. 3:24) and now He is the inheritance of all faithful followers (cf. Acts 15; Rom. 2:28-29; Galatians 3)!

73:27 “unfaithful” This is literally “to go awhoring from” (BDB 275, KB 275, *Qal* PARTICIPLE). This involves the concept of God as husband (cf. Hosea 1-3). To leave Him is spiritual adultery (cf. Exod. 34:15; Num. 15:39; Hos. 4:12; 9:1).

73:28 “the nearness” Note the contrast between “those who are far from You” (Ps. 73:27) and “the nearness of God” (Ps. 73:28).

▣ **“I have made the Lord GOD my refuge”** The name for Deity here is *Adonai YHWH*. See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

For “refuge” (BDB 340) see note at Ps. 5:11.

▣ **“That I may tell of all Your works”** It is crucial that faithful followers communicate what God has done for them. This is the opposite of Ps. 73:15.

Some scholars classify this Psalm as a “Wisdom Psalm,” but this phrase implies it is a “Thanksgiving Psalm.” A testimony of thanksgiving and a sacrifice in the temple were the common elements of this genre of Psalms.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Define the word “good” in Ps. 73:1.
2. What does it mean to be pure in heart? (Ps. 73:1)
3. Why did the psalmist almost lose his faith/trust/confidence in YHWH?
4. Who are “the wicked” described in Ps. 73:3-9?
5. How does Ps. 73:13 parallel Satan’s accusations of Job 1-2?
6. How did the psalmist escape his doubt?
7. List the benefits of verses Ps. 73:23-24.
8. Does Ps. 73:25-26 speak of vindication in this life or the hereafter? Why, why not?
9. What does Ps. 73:28a mean?

PSALM 74

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
An Appeal Against the Devastation of the Land by the Enemy <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of Asaph	A Plea for Relief From Oppressors	Prayer for Deliverance from National Enemies	A Prayer for National Deliverance	Lament on the Sack of the Temple
74:1-11	74:1-8	74:1-3	74:1-3	74:1-2
				74:3-5a
		74:4-8	74:4-8	
				74:5b-7
				74:8-9
	74:9-17	74:9-11	74:9-11	
				74:10-11
74:12-17		74:12-17	74:12-17	74:12-13
				74:14-15
				74:16-17
74:18-21	74:18-21	74:18-19	74:18-19	74:18-19
		74:20-23	74:20-21	74:20-21
74:22-23	74:22-23		74:22-23	74:22-23

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is an appeal to the Covenant God to remember (cf. Ps. 74:1,18,22) His people in a time when the Promised Land (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) has been invaded and occupied by pagans (cf. Ps. 74:4-8).

Note the contextual flow of the IMPERATIVES (i.e., prayer requests).

1. remember Your congregation, Ps. 74:2
2. turn (i.e., lift up your feet), Ps. 74:3
3. destroy them, Ps. 74:11
4. remember this, Ps. 74:18
5. consider the covenant, Ps. 74:20
6. arise, Ps. 74:22
7. plead Your own cause, Ps. 74:22
8. remember the reproaches of the foolish, Ps. 74:22

- B. Notice the different phrases which describe the covenant people.

1. the sheep of Your pasture, Ps. 74:1
2. the tribe of Your inheritance, Ps. 74:2
3. Your turtledove, Ps. 74:19
4. the afflicted and needy, Ps. 74:19,21

- C. Notice the different phrases used to designate the temple.

1. Mount Zion, Ps. 74:2
2. the perpetual ruins, Ps. 74:3
3. Your sanctuary, Ps. 74:3, 7
4. Your meeting place, Ps. 74:4
5. the dwelling place of Your name, Ps. 74:7

- D. Notice the strophe (Ps 74:12-17, mostly PERFECTS) which describes God as King of creation, using images from Genesis 1 (cf. Psalm 104) and Ugaritic poetry.

- E. It is surprising that the covenant people do not know why YHWH has abandoned them (i.e., for their covenant faithlessness). They do not offer any hint of repentance but assert God's faithfulness to His promises (note how different in Psalm 79).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 74:1-11

¹O God, why have You rejected *us* forever?

Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?

²Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old,

Which You have redeemed to be the tribe of Your inheritance;

And this Mount Zion, where You have dwelt.

³Turn Your footsteps toward the perpetual ruins;

The enemy has damaged everything within the sanctuary.

⁴Your adversaries have roared in the midst of Your meeting place;

They have set up their own standards for signs.

**⁵It seems as if one had lifted up
His axe in a forest of trees.**

**⁶And now all its carved work
They smash with hatchet and hammers.**

**⁷They have burned Your sanctuary to the ground;
They have defiled the dwelling place of Your name.**

**⁸They said in their heart, “Let us completely subdue them.”
They have burned all the meeting places of God in the land.**

**⁹We do not see our signs;
There is no longer any prophet,
Nor is there any among us who knows how long.**

**¹⁰How long, O God, will the adversary revile,
And the enemy spurn Your name forever?**

**¹¹Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand?
From within Your bosom, destroy *them*!**

74:1 The defeat and occupation of the Promised Land (cf. Gen. 1:1-3) was so shocking to the psalmist that he asked the question all the covenant people were thinking. They felt themselves “special” (cf. Exod. 19:5-6, but forgot that God’s promises were conditional on their faithful obedience (cf. Exod. 19:5; Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30). Abundant blessing and protection from God were God’s part but His people also had a responsibility (i.e., obedience, cf. Deut. 10:12-13).

The psalmist presents his prayer by asking questions (NASB).

1. Psalm 74:1 – two questions
2. Psalm 74:10 – one question
3. Psalm 74:11 – one question

▣ **“Your anger smoke”** This is literally “your nostrils smolder.” It is an anthropomorphic idiom (see Special Topic: God Described as Human) of God’s judgment (see Special Topic: Fire).

74:2 “Remember” This is the first of three uses of the term (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 74:1,18,22). The psalmist is asking God to remember His covenant (cf. Ps. 74:20, “consider the covenant,” BDB 613, KB 661, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 106:45; Lev. 26:42).

OT leaders often prayed this prayer. They wanted God to remember His promises and forget their sins! In essence they were praying for the merciful character of God to overlook their covenant violations. This does illustrate the weakness of human performance as the way to approach Deity! It does, however, point toward the need of a “new covenant” (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38), based on YHWH’s mercy as the basis of acceptance and gratitude as the call to godly living.

▣ **“You have purchased”** This is OT imagery using a commercial term (“purchase,” BDB 888, KB 1111, *Qal* PERFECT) to describe YHWH’s covenant (cf. Exod. 15:13,16; Deut. 32:6). They were His by His choice and His actions, not their merit (cf. Deut. 9:4-6).

▣ **“of old”** This phrase points to an act of God in the past. In Ps. 74:12-17 it refers to creation; here it refers to the Exodus.

In this Psalm the acts of God in both creation and the Exodus are merged. It is difficult to be specific on which idiom, VERB, or verse this refers.

The current state of the covenant people is tragic (cf. Ps. 74:3). The psalmist alludes to God's past acts of salvation/deliverance (i.e., either initial chaos or Egyptian bondage).

▣ **“redeemed”** The VERB (BDB 145, KB 169, *Qal* PERFECT) is a central concept in (1) the Exodus (cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:13) and (2) the theological purpose of the sacrificial system of Israel. See Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem.

▣ **“the tribe of Your inheritance”** This phrase does not refer to one of the thirteen tribes from Jacob, but to all of them (cf. Jer. 10:16; 51:19). In Isa. 63:17 “tribe” is PLURAL but also refers to the seed of Jacob/Israel and the initial promises to Abram (cf. Genesis 12; 15; 17).

▣ **“Mount Zion”** See notes at Ps. 2:6; 9:11; and 20:2. See Special Topic: Zion.

74:3 The *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (“lift up”) is another prayer request asking God to return to the place of the temple where He has dwelt (cf. Ps. 74:2c, “has dwelt,” BDB 1014, KB 1496, *Qal* PERFECT).

His sanctuary has been overrun, damaged, and occupied by pagan invaders (cf. Ps. 74:3-4).

▣ **“the enemy”** Notice the different ways the pagan invaders are characterized.

1. enemies – Ps. 74:3,10,18
2. adversaries – Ps. 74:4,10,23
3. a foolish people, Ps. 74:18,22
4. the wild beast, Ps. 74:19

There have been two suggestions about the historical setting that called forth this national lament.

1. the Neo-Babylonian invasion of 586 B.C., where the temple was burned (cf. Psalm 137)
2. the invasion of Edom in 485 B.C., where the temple was defiled and damaged

74:4-8 Note the obvious parallelism using, “they. . .” (NASB). These verses describe what the pagan invaders have done that should cause YHWH to act on Israel's behalf.

1. they have damaged the temple, Ps. 74:3a (cf. Lam. 2:6)
2. they have roared (i.e., symbol of victory, cf. Lam. 2:7) in the temple, Ps. 74:4a
3. they have set up their pagan signs (i.e., flags, carvings, altar), Ps. 74:4b
4. they destroyed the art work of YHWH's dwelling place, Ps. 74:5-6
5. they destroyed the temple with fire, Ps. 74:7a (i.e., 2 Kgs. 25:9; 2 Chr. 36:19)
6. they defiled the temple, Ps. 74:7b
7. they desired to completely destroy God's inheritance, Ps. 74:8a
8. they burned all the local YHWHistic shrines, Ps. 74:8b

74:4 “Your adversaries” If the burning of the temple mentioned in Ps. 74:7 is the same as 2 Kgs. 25:9, then the adversaries are the Babylonians (cf. Lamentations 2).

▣ **“have roared in the midst of Your meeting place”** This imagery describes the pagan occupation of the temple area. The VERB “roared” (BDB 980, KB 1367, *Qal* PERFECT) denotes the vicious and victorious demise of God's special dwelling place. This VERB is used of lions, which denotes the voracity and power of the pagan invaders (cf. Isa. 5:29; Jer. 2:15).

74:5-6 Dahood, in *The Anchor Bible* (vol. 17b, p. 202), says “Verses 5 and 6 are among the most obscure and difficult of the entire Psalter.” In context it must describe something the pagan invaders did to the temple before they burned it. It denotes the anger of the invaders against YHWH’s special worship place. They wanted to totally humiliate the God of Israel.

74:5 The LXX has the opening line as “as though into the entrance above” (i.e., the upper entrance of the temple). The Hebrew root, עלה (BDB 750-751) can mean

1. leaf, foliage
2. whole burnt offering
3. ascent, stairway

In this verse I assume it refers to an entrance to the temple or temple area.

74:6 “hatchet. . .hammers” These two terms (BDB 506 and BDB 476) occur only here in the OT. This Psalm has many rare and unique terms.

The imagery of “axes” and “hatchets” may reflect Jeremiah’s description of the Babylonian army (cf. Jer. 46:22-23).

74:8 “Let us completely subdue them” There is uncertainty in the MT. The line may refer to

1. the complete annihilation of the covenant people
2. the destruction of the temple and the local worship sites

74:9-11 The covenant people could not comprehend YHWH’s apparent absence and silence. He had chosen not to act and had even taken away His prophetic speakers. They implored Him to act, to defend His name and temple and people!

The problem has several aspects.

1. If the invader is Babylon then YHWH is fighting on their side.
2. Israel is the object of His wrath for their idolatry and faithlessness.
3. However, YHWH has an eternal redemptive plan which involves the seed of Abraham (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan).
4. He will both judge and deliver Israel!

74:9 “prophet” See a parallel in Lam. 2:9.

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT Prophecy

74:10 YHWH used pagans to judge His people but they will eventually be judged also because

1. they revile – BDB 357, KB 355, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 74:18 (another example: Zeph. 2:8,10)
2. they spurn His name – BDB 610, KB 658, *Piel* IMPERFECT

The IMPERFECT denotes an ongoing action and attitude.

▣ **“How long”** This is a recurrent question in the Psalms (cf. Ps. 6:3; 13:1; 44:23-24; 79:5; 80:4; 85:5; 89:46; 90:13; 94:3). This information had to come from a priest or prophet.

1. the temple was destroyed (no priests)
2. there were no prophets (Ps. 74:9)

This is a question all suffering faithful followers ask in a fallen, imperfect world. The world may be fallen, but God is still in control (cf. Ps. 74:12-17).

▣ **“Your name”** See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

74:11 YHWH's lack of support for Israel sends the wrong message to the world (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). He must act to show the world who He is and His greater purpose (cf. Ps. 59:13-15).

▣ **“Your right hand”** See Special Topic: God Described as Human (anthropomorphism).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 74:12-17

¹²**Yet God is my king from of old,
Who works deeds of deliverance in the midst of the earth.**
¹³**You divided the sea by Your strength;
You broke the heads of the sea monsters in the waters.**
¹⁴**You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
You gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.**
¹⁵**You broke open springs and torrents;
You dried up ever-flowing streams.**
¹⁶**Yours is the day, Yours also is the night;
You have prepared the light and the sun.**
¹⁷**You have established all the boundaries of the earth;
You have made summer and winter.**

74:12-17 This strophe was the psalmist's way of focusing on God's wonderful, creative acts (i.e., Genesis 1 or the Exodus). He was the God of creation! He brought this world into being for a purpose. Israel was a crucial part of that purpose (i.e., Ps. 74:12, see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan).

Notice the parallelism (i.e., “You. . .,” BDB 61 used seven times with PERFECT TENSES), which could refer to the initial creation of Genesis 1 or the defeat of Egypt and the Exodus.

1. divided (this Hebrew word is uncertain, it follows BDB 830 II, but KB 978 does not affirm this usage) the sea
2. broke the heads of the sea monsters (possibly SINGULAR and, therefore, parallel to Leviathan)
3. crushed the heads of Leviathan
4. provided food for the creatures/people of the wilderness (in context “creatures” seems best, cf. Isa. 13:21-22; 23:13; 34:14; Jer. 50:39, NRSV, TEV, NJB)
5. broke open springs of water
6. dried up ever-flowing streams
7. prepared light and night
8. established all boundaries of the earth (i.e., seas, seasons, night and day)
9. formed the seasons (i.e., agriculture)

74:12 “my King” I think the concept of YHWH as “King” has two possible references.

1. He was the true leader/sovereign of the covenant people (cf. Ps. 89:1-4, see note at Ps. 44:4)
2. He is given this title because of this action as creator in His defeat of watery chaos (i.e., Rahab/Leviathan [Canaanite chaos monsters], cf. Job 26:12; Ps. 89:5-10; 93:1-5; Isa. 51:9)

The OT presents two models of creation.

- a. Genesis 1-2 (speaking into existence)
- b. Psalm 89; 96 (defeat of chaos, using mythological images from Sumer, Babylon, and Canaan. This is not intended to give reality to these pagan ANE worldviews but to help relate YHWH's message to the people of those cultures, see NIDOTTE, vol 4, p. 548, #7)

74:14 “Leviathan” This term was common in Ugaritic mythology (cf. Isa. 27:1). See below my note from **Isaiah 27:1**:

▣ **“Leviathan the fleeing serpent”** Leviathan (BDB 531) seems to be a Ugaritic mythological sea animal (i.e., Job 41:19-21) mentioned in Job 3:8; Ps. 104:26; Amos 9:3. However, sometimes it is used as a symbol for an evil nation (cf. Ps. 74:13-14, possibly Egypt). It resembles a river snaking through their land. Sometimes this term is linked specifically to “Rahab,” which is a way of referring to Egypt (cf. Ps. 87:4; 89:9-10; and Isa. 30:7). It seems to me that, in context, we are talking about a river symbolizing a national enemy, either Egypt or Assyria (cf. Ps. 74:12). The reason this term can be used symbolically so easily is that it was previously used in some of the mythological literature of Canaan (cf. Ps. 74:12-17; see G. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 239-240).

There is a parallelism between

1. the fleeing serpent (BDB 638 I) or sea monster (NASB footnote)
2. the twisted sea monster
3. the dragon who lives in the sea

This same allusion is found in (1) Ugaritic poems and (2) Isa. 51:9, using “Rahab,” who is also identified by the term “dragon” (BDB 1072).

The only apparent connection between this verse and the context is Isa. 27:11-12.

1. YHWH as creator, Ps. 74:11
2. flowing streams of the Euphrates and the brook of Egypt in Ps. 74:12
3. the end of time is like the beginning of time (i.e., Genesis 1-2; Revelation 21-22)

Apparently Isaiah is a compilation of his writings over many years and compiled on the basis of word plays or themes, not history.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 74:18-21

¹⁸**Remember this, O LORD, that the enemy has reviled,**

And a foolish people has spurned Your name.

¹⁹**Do not deliver the soul of Your turtledove to the wild beast;**

Do not forget the life of Your afflicted forever.

²⁰**Consider the covenant;**

For the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence.

²¹**Let not the oppressed return dishonored;**

Let the afflicted and needy praise Your name.

74:18-21 This strophe alludes to the initial prayer of Ps. 74:1-11. YHWH needs to act in deliverance

1. because the enemy has reviled and spurned His name (cf. Ps. 74:10)
2. because Israel is His special people (cf. Exod. 19:5-6)
3. because of His promises to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1-3)
4. because His actions will send the right message to the nations whom He desires that they know and acknowledge Him

There are four JUSSIVES and two IMPERATIVES.

1. IMPERATIVES
 - a. remember – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 74:1,18,22
 - b. consider – BDB 613, KB 661, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. JUSSIVES
 - a. do not deliver – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, Ps. 74:19

- b. do not forget – BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, Ps. 74:19b
- c. let not the oppressed return dishonored – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* JUSSIVE, Ps. 74:21a
- d. let the afflicted and needy praise Your name – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, Ps. 74:21b

74:19 “turtledove” This word (BDB 1076 II) is used

- 1. of a sacrificial animal, cf. Gen. 15:9; Lev. 1:14; 5:7,11; 12:6,8; 14:23,30; 15:14,29; Num. 6:10
- 2. of a migratory bird, cf. Sol. 2:12; Jer. 8:7
- 3. as a symbol of the covenant people, cf. Ps. 74:19

There is another, more common, word for “dove” (BDB 401) also used in the above ways (i.e., Sol. 2:14; 5:2; 6:9). The term in Psalm 74 could denote

- 1. helplessness
- 2. YHWH sacrificed His people in judgment
- 3. a love word showing His love for Israel (Hos. 7:11; 11:11)

Both lines of Ps. 74:19 refer to the same thing, so #1 may be correct.

The NEB, following the LXX, suggests an emendation of “of your dove,” תורך, to “which praise you,” תודך. The UBS Text Project (p. 325) gives option #1 a “C” rating (considerable doubt).

74:20 This is a difficult verse to interpret. Does it refer to

- 1. the violence of the invaders
- 2. the place of exile of God’s people
- 3. a veiled reference to *Sheol*, the nether realm (i.e., as in *Sheol*, so on the earth, even the Promised Land)

It seems best to me to view Ps. 74:20 and 21 together as the oppression being suffered by the covenant people. If the historical setting is Babylon, then exile; if Edom, then in the land of Canaan.

74:21 “the afflicted and needy” This does not refer specifically to the poor but to the suffering, covenant people (i.e., the faithful remnant, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 459).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 74:22-23

²²Arise, O God, *and* plead Your own cause;

Remember how the foolish man reproaches You all day long.

²³Do not forget the voice of Your adversaries,

The uproar of those who rise against You which ascends continually.

74:22-23 This is a final prayer for YHWH to act.

- 1. arise – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. plead Your own cause – BDB 936, KB 1224, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (face-to-face judicial encounter with those who revile His name and people, cf. Ps. 74:3-11)
- 3. remember the reproaches of the foolish – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

YHWH, please act! Act so the world may know (cf. Ps. 55:13; 83:18; Ezek. 36:22-38).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. This Psalm is about the invasion and occupation of the Promised Land. It asks God to remember (cf. Ps. 74: 2,18,22) His covenant promises but never mentions why God allowed Israel/Judah to be defeated. Why did He?
2. Who are the invaders?
3. Does the Hebrew Bible use mythological imagery from the ANE? What? Why?
4. Why are Ps. 74:5-6 and 74:20 so difficult to understand?
5. Who does “the afflicted” of Ps. 74:21 refer to?

PSALM 75

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God Abases the Proud, but Exalts the Righteous <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; <i>set</i> to Al-tashheth. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song	Thanksgiving For God's Righteous Judgment	National Thanksgiving for God's Mighty Acts	God the Judge	The Universal Judge
75:1-5	75:1 75:2-3 75:4-5	75:1 75:2-5	75:1 75:2-5	75:1 75:2-3 75:4-5
75:6-8	75:6-8	75:6-9	75:6-8	75:6-8
75:9-10	75:9 75:10	75:10	75:9-10	75:9-10

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. It is difficult to know when the psalmist is speaking and when he is speaking for God.
 1. Psalm 75:1 – obviously the psalmist
 2. Psalm 75:2-3 – obviously God
 3. Psalm 75:4-5 – could be either one
 4. Psalm 75:6-8 – the psalmist
 5. Psalm 75:9 – God (MT, “I”)

- B. God acts and then His acts must be recorded and explained (i.e., inspiration) to human authors to put this revelation into a form that can be passed on to future generations (i.e., oral, written, stories).
- C. The Creator will require an account of every human creature's stewardship of the gift of life and revelation (cf. Ps. 19:1-6,7-11)! Justice will come one day!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 75:1-5

¹We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks,
 For Your name is near;
 Men declare Your wondrous works.
²“When I select an appointed time,
 It is I who judge with equity.
³The earth and all who dwell in it melt;
 It is I who have firmly set its pillars. Selah.
⁴I said to the boastful, ‘Do not boast,’
 And to the wicked, ‘Do not lift up the horn;
⁵Do not lift up your horn on high,
 Do not speak with insolent pride.”

75:1 “We give thanks” This VERB (BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is repeated twice for emphasis (note Ps. 107:1,8,15,21,31). The term in the *Hiphil* is used often (65 times) in the Psalter. It is translated mostly as “praise,” but in Ps. 32:5 it is translated “confess.”



NASB, NKJV,	
NRSV	“For Your name is near”
NJB, RSV,	
Peshitta, LXX	“we call upon your name”
JPSOA	“Your presence is near”

The MT is followed by NASB. The UBS Text Project (p. 326) gives the second option a “C” rating (considerable doubt), but accepts it as the most likely original text.

The problem is, what does “and near Your name” mean?

1. we tell of Your presence with Your people in acts of deliverance
2. You (i.e., “Your name,” which equals YHWH’s personal presence) are near now and we can expect You to act (because of Israel’s sin YYWH had not always delivered them)
3. we call on Your name and tell what You have done for the covenant people (two separate acts)
4. AB makes it a title for God, “O Near One,” as it does
 - a. “the Exalted One” in Ps. 75:5a
 - b. “the Victor” in Ps. 75:6 (twice)
 - c. “the Eternal” in Ps. 74:9
 - d. “the Just One” in Ps. 74:10

AB claims there are twelve divine names in this Psalm.

▣ **“Men declare Your wondrous works”** As Israel taught her children about their ancestors and God’s promises (cf. Deut. 4:9,10; 6:7,20-25; 11:19; 32:46), they were passing on the promises and their fulfillment in the next generation. These “wondrous acts” (BDB 810, KB 927, see Special Topic: Wonderful Things) were the powerful acts of deliverance, protection, and provision that Israel had experienced throughout her history.

This revelation of the character, promises, and faithful interventions of YHWH were a way to

1. keep Israel in faith
2. bring the nations to faith

The NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 284, lists the different words used to describe God’s acts which reveal His character.

1. wonders, cf. Ps. 9:1; 26:7; 40:5; 75:1
2. work/acts, cf. Ps. 44:1; 73:28; 107:22; 118:17
3. glory, cf. Ps. 96:3
4. righteousness, cf. Ps. 71:15
5. loyal love, cf. Ps. 88:11
6. greatness, cf. Ps. 145:6

75:2-5 “When I select an appointed time” In these verses, God is the speaker. It is possible this relates to Ps. 74:22-23 (i.e., God pleading His case).

75:2 “I select an appointed time” This is a literary way of asserting God’s sovereignty. He sets the time and place of all world events (i.e., Ps. 74:12-17; Deut. 32:8; Romans 9-11).

1. seasons – Gen. 1:14-18; Ps. 72:17; 74:16-17; 104:19; 136:7-8
2. worship days – Gen. 2:3; Exod. 20:8-11; Leviticus 23; Numbers 28-29
3. all things are appointed by God – Eccl. 3:1-11 (cf. Job 14:5; Ps. 31:15; Acts 17:31)

God’s people do not understand His timetable. He delivers on His schedule, not His people’s. Often judgment, even invasion, is His will! But one day He will set all things straight!

▣ **“I who judge with equity”** Two theological points are asserted.

1. God will judge the earth
2. He will do it fairly based on His revelation (cf. Ps. 9:8; 58:11; 67:4; 96:10,13; 98:9)

75:3 “The earth and all who dwell in it melt” The VERBAL (BDB 556, KB 555, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Exod. 15:15; Jos. 2:9,24; 1 Sam. 14:16; Isa. 14:31; Jer. 49:23) denotes the fear of a population.

Not only people’s hearts melt but the earth itself is affected by the presence of its Creator/Judge (cf. Ps. 46:6; Isa. 24:19-20; Amos 9:5; Micah 1:4; Nahum 1:5).

In the NT 2 Peter 3:10 predicts the dissolving of this planet (cf. Matt. 5:18; 24:35; Rev. 21:1).

There is a new heaven and a new earth coming. The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 will be fully implemented. The Bible describes this new age in terms of Garden of Eden imagery (compare Genesis 1-2 with Revelation 21-22).

▣ **“It is I who have firmly set its pillars”** This is a literary way of referring to the foundations of the earth (i.e., initial creation, cf. 1 Sam. 2:8; Job 38:4-6).

In Jonah 2:6 the “roots of the mountains” is also creation imagery. See my notes below from Jonah 2:6.

Jonah 2:6 “I descended to the roots of the mountains” The OT uses the physical direction “down” to describe *Sheol* (BDB 432, KB 434, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15; Isa. 5:14; 14:19). The term *Sheol* and “pit” (BDB 1001) are parallel (cf. Ps. 30:3). It is this

metaphorical expression of Jonah's sense of approaching the underworld that makes his experience the object of Jesus' comment (cf. Matt. 12:40-41; Luke 11:30). Jonah believed he was going to die, but God had mercy on him! God's judgment was not His last word. There was purpose in the punishment.

The psalmist and the covenant people did not understand why they faced such difficulties when they knew their God was in control of all things! Even amidst chaos, invasion, and injustice God's sovereignty was stable and sure (cf. Revelation 4-5)! His timetable is geared to His larger redemptive purposes, not our immediate wants/desires/needs!

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Psalm 3:2 and Introduction VII.

75:4-5 The Creator speaks as the Moral Guide. YHWH's laws reflected His character. The ones who face His judgment were those who

1. boast – “do not boast,” BDB 237, KB 248, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. wicked – “do not lift up your horn,” BDB 926, KB 1202 (twice), *Hiphil* IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. prideful – “do not speak. . .,” BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

It seems that “the wicked,” (Ps. 7:4) of this Psalm are

1. pagan nations who are attempting an invasion
2. arrogant Israelites (cf. Ps. 78:3,8-9,18-19)

75:4 “horn” This is an animal symbol of power and preeminence (see Special Topic: Horns Used by Israel, cf. Ps. 75:10; 1 Sam. 2:1,10; Daniel 7-8).

75:5

NASB	“pride”
[NKJV, NRSV,	
Peshitta	“neck”
NEB, LXX	“Rock”

The MT has “neck” (BDB 848). The REB has “rock.” The two words are very similar (i.e., “rock” has one more consonant). Possibly REB reflects the usage of Job 15:26. The UBS Text Project (p. 326) gives “neck” a “C” rating (considerable doubt). The JPSOA has “in vainglorious bluster.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 75:6-8

**⁶For not from the east, nor from the west,
Nor from the desert *comes* exaltation;
⁷But God is the Judge;
He puts down one and exalts another.
⁸For a cup is in the hand of the LORD, and the wine foams;
It is well mixed, and He pours out of this;
Surely all the wicked of the earth must drain *and* drink down its dregs.**

75:6-8 This strophe reflects the universal presence of YHWH, much like Psalm 139 does, but here the context focuses on His judgment of the wicked (cf. Ps. 75:4-5).

Often the wicked seem to have the upper hand but God will set things straight (cf. Ps. 146:7; 1 Sam. 2:7; Romans 9; James 4:10). This divine action will be a reversal of expectations.

75:6 This verse is using Palestinian/Canaanite imagery to assert universality.

1. east – west
2. sunrise – sunset
3. desert (south) – mountains (or “uplifting”) which would denote the north

75:8 “a cup” This is usually an idiom for human destiny and it is usually negative (cf. Isa. 51:17,22; Jer. 25:15-16,27-28). See full note at Ps. 11:6.

▣ **“It is well mixed”** This refers to the ancient method of mixing different types of fermented fruits and grains to form more intoxicating drinks. See Special Topic: Alcohol and Alcohol Abuse.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 75:9-10

⁹**But as for me, I will declare *it* forever;**

I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.

¹⁰**And all the horns of the wicked He will cut off,**

But the horns of the righteous will be lifted up.

75:9-10 This strophe is the closing words of the psalmist.

1. he will declare YHWH’s wondrous deeds (cf. Ps. 75:1)
2. he will sing praises to the God of Jacob
3. he will affirm the reversal of YHWH’s righteous judgment

This reflects a temple worship setting!

75:9 The MT has “I will declare” but the LXX and Peshitta have, “I will rejoice” (cf. NRSV). The difference is one consonant. The LXX is attempting to establish a synonymous parallelism between Ps. 75:9a and 9b.

75:10 “He will cut off” The MT has “I will.” The UBS Text Project (p. 328) gives this an “A” rating.

This Psalm has several speakers. Possibly Ps. 75:9 is the psalmist and 75:10 is YHWH.

▣ **“horns”** Notice that this idiom can be used positively or negatively (see Special Topic: Horns Used by Israel).

1. negatively – cf. Ps. 75:4-5,10a; Jer. 48:25; Lam. 2:17
2. positively –cf. Ps. 75:10b; 1 Sam. 2:1,10; Ps. 89:17,24; 92:10; 112:9

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. List the different speakers in this Psalm.
2. Does this Psalm magnify God as Creator or Judge?
3. Explain the imagery of
 - a. “pillars”
 - b. “horn”
 - c. “cup”
4. Does this Psalm look toward a temporal judgment or an end-time judgment?

PSALM 76

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Victorious Power of the God of Jacob <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.	The Majesty of God in Judgment	A Song of Zion Celebrating God's Ultimate Victory Over the Nations	God the Victor	Hymn to God the Awe-inspiring
76:1-3	76:1-3	76:1-3	76:1-3	76:1-3
76:4-7	76:4-6	76:4-6	76:4-6	76:4-6
	76:7-9	76:7-9	76:7-9	76:7-9
76:8-10				
	76:10-12	76:10-12	76:10	76:10-12
76:11-12			76:11-12	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The OT mentions what seems to be conflicting revelation.
 1. God's special care and attention to the family of Abraham (Ps. 76:1-7)
 2. God's desire for all the nations to know Him (Ps. 76:8-12)
- B. I think this very issue is the purpose of the new covenant which is revealed in the NT (i.e., the gospel of Jesus Christ). I have tried to express this theological tension in two Special Topics.
 1. Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan
 2. Special Topic: OT Predictions of the Future vs. NT Predictions

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 76:1-3

¹God is known in Judah;

His name is great in Israel.

²His tabernacle is in Salem;

His dwelling place also is in Zion.

³There He broke the flaming arrows,

The shield and the sword and the weapons of war. Selah.

76:1-3 This strophe reflects the “holy war” imagery (Ps. 76:3). The historical setting seems to be the period of the Divided Monarchy (i.e., 922 B.C.-586 B.C.) because it mentions both Judah and Israel (922-722 B.C.). Exactly which military campaign or invasion by a pagan neighbor or ANE power is uncertain.

76:1 “known” The Hebrew connotation has two aspects.

1. information about something or someone (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5)
2. personal relationship

See Special Topic: Know.

▣ **“His name”** Notice that “His name” is parallel to *Elohim*.

For “name” see Special Topic at Ps. 1:6. For *Elohim* see Special Topic: Names for Deity.

76:2 “Salem. . .Zion” See Special Topic:

SPECIAL TOPIC: Moriah, Salem, Jebus, Jerusalem, Zion

76:3 There are several military items listed to illustrate YHWH’s military victory.

1. arrows (BDB 905)
2. shield (BDB 171)
3. sword (BDB 352)
4. weapons of war (BDB 536)

The destruction of the enemies’ weapons (cf. Ps. 46:9; Isa. 9:5; Ezek. 39:9-10) became a way of showing that

1. the enemy is completely defeated
2. Israel trusted in YHWH and did not need the weapons

▣ **“Selah”** See notes at Psalm 3:2 and Introduction, VII.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 76:4-7

⁴You are resplendent,

More majestic than the mountains of prey.

⁵The stouthearted were plundered,

They sank into sleep;

And none of the warriors could use his hands.

⁶At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob,

Both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep.

⁷You, even You, are to be feared;

And who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?

76:4-7 This strophe continues the military imagery.

76:4

NASB “resplendent. . . majestic”

NKJV “glorious and excellent”

NRSV, TEV “glorious. . . majestic”

NJB “radiant. . . renowned”

JPSOA “resplendent. . . glorious”

These two terms describe YHWH.

1. The first (BDB 21) may be another term related to “thunder bolt” (cf. Ps. 78:48) of Ps. 76:3, emphasizing a luminous aspect (i.e., light) to YHWH’s presence, like the *Shekinah* Cloud of the Exodus.
2. The second (BDB 15) may refer to YHWH’s superiority among all gods (idols), which is alluded to in Ps. 76:7 (cf. 1 Chr. 16:25; Ps. 89:7; 96:4).



NASB, NKJV,

JPSOA “the mountains of prey”

NRSV, REB,

LXX “the everlasting mountains”

NJB “the mountain of booty”

NET “you descend from the hills where you killed your prey”

Obviously this is a difficult phrase to interpret. The UBS Text Project (p. 330) gives the NRSV option a “C” rating (considerable doubt). This imagery may be the focus of Hab. 3:6. UBS suggests the NRSV or NJB options. The NET Bible sees it as a metaphor of a “lion.”

76:5 “the stouthearted” This term (BDB 7 CONSTRUCT BDB 524) implies a stubborn, anti-God attitude (cf. Isa. 46:12). This characterizes the invaders who will be

1. killed (i.e., sleep, as a metaphor for death)
2. plundered (BDB 1021, KB 1531, *Hithpoel* PERFECT)

because they were so afraid they could not fight (i.e., use their hands).



NASB, NKJV “plundered”

NRSV “stripped of their spoil”

TEV “stripped of all they had”

NJB “taken from them” (used as VERB for Ps. 76:4b)

LXX “were troubled”

REB, JPSOA “despoiled”

Peshitta “were dismayed”

This rare form (*Hithpolel*) is defined by KB (1531) as “to be robbed.” BDB (1021) defines it as “spoiled.” The invaders wanted to despoil God’s city/temple, but were despoiled themselves.

76:6 “At Your rebuke” YHWH’s powerful voice wins victories (cf. Ps. 80:16), as it creates (cf. Genesis 1; Job 26:5-11; Ps. 18:7-15; 104:5-9). His voice is an idiom of His will in the world. He speaks, it is done!

It is possible the rebuke (BDB 172) may refer to (1) a lion’s roar from Ps. 76:4b. The JPSOA sees Ps. 76:2 as referring to a lion’s den (uses Job 38:39-40 as a reference) or (2) a battle cry.

▣ **“O God of Jacob”** This is a title that focuses on YHWH’s promises and covenant with the Patriarchs.

▣ **“Both rider and horse were cast in a dead sleep”** This is terminology from the splitting of the Red Sea for Israel’s escape, but its closure on the elite Egyptian military unit (cf. Exod. 14:28,30; 15:1,21). This same imagery is found in Jeremiah’s description of the defeat of Babylon (cf. Jer. 51:21).

It is possible that Ps. 76:6 is restating 76:5. If so, “sleep” is the warriors’ inability to perform their skills (i.e., limp hands), not a reference to death, which is often described as “sleep” (cf. Deut. 31:16; 2 Sam. 7:12; 1 Kgs. 1:21; Job 7:21).

The OT often speaks of God’s causing people to not understand by using “sleep,” “seeing,” “hearing” (i.e., Deut. 29:4; Ps. 69:23; Isa. 6:9-10; 29:10; Micah 3:6).

76:7 “to be feared” This may refer to

1. the enemies of the covenant God and His people
2. the idols of the nations (cf. Ps. 89:7; 96:4; 1 Chr. 16:25)

▣ **“who may stand in Your presence”** This is court scene imagery, usually associated with the end-time (cf. Ezra 9:15; Ps. 130:3; Nah. 1:6; Mal. 3:2; Rev. 6:17). God’s people will be able to stand before Him on that day (i.e., Luke 21:36; Jude vv. 24-25).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 76:8-10

⁸You caused judgment to be heard from heaven;

The earth feared and was still

⁹When God arose to judgment,

To save all the humble of the earth.

Selah.

¹⁰For the wrath of man shall praise You;

With a remnant of wrath You will gird Yourself.

76:8-10 It is possible that Ps. 76:7 should go with this strophe (cf. NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB).

In this context “all the humble of the earth” refers to those who fear/revere YHWH (cf. Ps. 40:13-17). Note the universal element and the contrast between

1. God saves the humble
2. but all acknowledge Him (cf. Ps. 72:11; 76:12; Phil. 2:6-11)

76:10 “remnant” This word is used in several different senses.

SPECIAL TOPIC: The Remnant (BDB 984), Three Senses

▣ This striking imagery alludes to YHWH as warrior (cf. Isa. 59:17). This same imagery is used by Paul in Eph. 6:10-17, which denotes “spiritual warfare.” YHWH is the victor! YHWH is the champion of those who trust Him!

The UBS *Handbook* (p. 669) mentions that the NAB and NEB (also REB) change the vowels in this verse to geographical locations in the north (city) and south (nation) of Palestine to make it parallel to Ps. 76:11b.

1. man (אָדָם) becomes Edom (אֶדוֹם)
2. wrath (חֵמָה) becomes Hamath (חֲמַת)

The problem is that the word “wrath” is used twice in Ps. 76:10. Unless it is a purposeful word play, this change of vowels is speculation and is not supported by any ancient versions.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 76:11-12

¹¹Make vows to the LORD your God and fulfill *them*;

Let all who are around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared.

¹²He will cut off the spirit of princes;

He is feared by the kings of the earth.

76:11-12 As Ps. 76:7 could go with 76:8 and 9, so too, Ps. 76:10 could go with 76:11-12 (cf. NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB). Paragraphing does not have a textual marker. It is not an inspired aspect of the Hebrew text. Paragraphing must be ascertained from the context (i.e., every paragraph has one central truth or subject).

76:11a This describes “the humble” of Ps. 76:9. Two IMPERATIVES are used to describe their actions.

1. make vows – BDB 623, KB 674, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. fulfill *them* – BDB 1022, KB 1532, *Piel* IMPERATIVE (cf. Leviticus 27; Numbers 30; Deut. 23:21-23)

76:11b The second line of Ps. 76:11 has a *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (“let all who are around Him bring gifts to Him. . .”). This is a third descriptive phrase referring to either

1. thank offering for the termination of a vow
2. appropriate sacrifice (cf. Leviticus 1-7)

If Ps. 76:11a refers to faithful followers in the covenant people, then 76:11b refers to worldwide followers who will worship YHWH (cf. Ps. 45:12; 68:29,31; 72:10; Isa. 18:7; Zeph. 3:10).

76:11 “bring gifts to Him” In Gen. 49:10, the famous prophecy of Jacob/Israel denotes Judah as the tribe from which Messiah will come. There the name *Shiloh*, שִׁילֹה (BDB 1010) parallels “ruler,” however it is possible to divide the consonants into שִׁי לֹה, “tribute to him” by adding new vowels (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 1223). If this is correct then the concept of YHWH accepting “tribute” from the nations is confirmed (cf. Ps. 68:29; 76:11; Isa. 18:7). This tribute was an ANE way of showing sovereignty. One day the nations will come to YHWH (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan).

76:12 As YHWH’s deliverance/salvation is universal (cf. Ps. 76:9), so too, His judgment (Ps. 76:12).

The term “spirit” (*ruach*, BDB 924) means human person.

The VERB “cut off” (BDB 130, KB 148, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is a Hebrew root that has several meanings.

1. cut off – meaning to take away
2. cut off – meaning to gather, such as a grape harvest
3. cut off – by fortifying an enclosed place (i.e., fortress)

Because of Ps. 76:11 one wonders if option #2 may denote an end-time gathering of believing nations (i.e., “princes,” BDB 617, cf. Ezek. 28:2) who fear (lit. who is terrible, BDB 431, KB 432, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) God by denoting His awesome power in protecting Jerusalem and His covenant people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Does Ps. 76:1 reflect the period of the divided Monarchy?
2. Why is Ps. 76:4 so hard to translate?
3. Is Ps. 76:9 another universal allusion or a reference to the Jews in exile?
4. How do Ps. 76:11-12 relate to the preceding verses?

PSALM 77

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Comfort In Trouble From Recalling God's Mighty Deeds <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of Asaph.	The Consoling Memory of God's Redemptive Works	Prayer For Deliverance From Personal Trouble	Comfort in Times of Distress	Meditations on Israel's Past
77:1-6	77:1-3	77:1-3	77:1-3	77:1 77:2-3
	77:4-6	77:4-10	77:4-10	77:4-6
77:7-10	77:7-9 77:10-15			77:7-9 77:10-12
77:11-15		77:11-15	77:11-15	77:13-15
77:16-20	77:16-20	77:16-20	77:16-20	77:16-17 77:18-19 77:20

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is characterized by COHORTATIVES (8). The psalmist is remembering what he did and what YHWH has done in the past.
- B. Psalm 77:11-15, 16-20 focus on YHWH's acts of
 - 1. deliverance
 - 2. creation
- C. YHWH is the
 - 1. creator
 - 2. warrior
 - 3. sustainer
 - 4. shepherd
- D. This Psalm specifically mentions
 - 1. Jacob, Ps. 77:15
 - 2. Joseph, Ps. 77:15
 - 3. Moses, Ps. 77:20
 - 4. Aaron, Ps. 77:20
 YHWH's past acts of deliverance and provision seem long ago and far away. Note the series of questions in Ps. 77:7-9.
- E. Psalm 77:16-20 are similar in theology and imagery to YHWH as Creator in Ps. 74:13-17. The water imagery could refer to Genesis 1 (i.e., creation) or Exodus 14-15 (i.e., the exodus).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 77:1-6

- ¹**My voice *rises* to God, and I will cry aloud;
My voice *rises* to God, and He will hear me.**
- ²**In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord;
In the night my hand was stretched out without weariness;
My soul refused to be comforted.**
- ³**When I remember God, then I am disturbed;
When I sigh, then my spirit grows faint. Selah.**
- ⁴**You have held my eyelids *open*;
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.**
- ⁵**I have considered the days of old,
The years of long ago.**
- ⁶**I will remember my song in the night;
I will meditate with my heart,
And my spirit ponders:**

77:1 “My voice *rises* to God” This phrase with no VERB is repeated twice for emphasis. The psalmist has prayed often and intensely but with no peace/result! He trusts YHWH but longs for Him to act as He has in the past on behalf of the covenant people.

▣ **“I will cry aloud”** This VERB (BDB 858, KB 1042, *Qal* COHORTATIVE) is used often in the exodus and wilderness wandering period (cf. Exod. 14:10,15; 17:4; Num. 12:13; 20:16; Deut. 26:7). It is possible that the description of Ps. 77:16-19 refers to this same period. There was no silent prayer in the ancient world. Reading and prayer were spoken aloud!

▣ **“He will hear me”** This is both affirmation and request! The rest of this strophe (Ps. 77:1-6) expresses the psalmist’s distress at the apparent silence of YHWH.

77:2 “In the day of my trouble” This is a recurrent phrase in the Psalms (cf. Ps. 50:15; 86:7; slightly different phrasing but the same concept in Ps. 91:15; 107:6,15).

The use of “day” denotes a period of time, not a specific 24 hour period. See Special Topic: Day (*yom*).

▣ **“In the night my hand was stretched out”** Notice that “in the day” of line 1 is parallel to “in the night” of line 2. This was a way of expressing constant (i.e., “without weariness”), around-the-clock prayer (i.e., “hand stretched out”).

Jewish prayer posture was usually

1. standing
2. hands raised
3. eyes open, lifted to heaven

The VERB (BDB 620, KB 669, *Niphal* PERFECT) is literally “poured out.” NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 27, thinks that two aspects of prayer are combined in this verse (cf. Lam. 2:19).

1. pouring one’s heart out to God in prayer
2. lifting/stretching one’s hands out to God in prayer

▣ **“My soul refused to be comforted”** YHWH seemed not to hear and act so the psalmist continued to pray! This is theologically parallel to Habakkuk (i.e., Hab. 2:1).

77:3 This is a series of three *Qal* COHORTATIVES. The psalmist could not find peace in prayer. It seemed YHWH’s actions in the past (cf. Ps. 77:5) on the covenant people’s behalf had changed (cf. Ps. 77:10b).

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Ps. 3:2. Notice it appears at the end of Ps. 77:3, 9, 15. The NJB and NKJV see its use as closing separate strophes.

77:4a This line of poetry is confusing. The psalmist wants to quit praying but YHWH causes (BDB 28, KB 31, *Qal* PERFECT) him to keep on. It is possible to interpret this as God allowing him to remain awake so that he can continue to pray. It seems that Ps. 77:4-6 serves as an introduction to the six questions of 77:7-9 with the possible shocking conclusion of Ps. 77:10!

This first strophe describes the psalmist’s acts in detail (as does Ps. 77:11-12). This is a record of the psalmist’s theological struggle for more information about God and His will and way for the covenant people. The psalmist sees the obvious disconnect between the past and the present. He cannot understand why!

77:6 “I will remember. . . I will meditate. . . ponder” These are three VERBS which describe the psalmist’s mental actions (cf. Ps. 143:5) from despair (Ps. 77:1-5) and doubt (Ps. 77:7-10). It is not until Ps. 77:11-15,16-20 that he regains his sense of trust in YHWH’s character and actions on Israel’s behalf.

Notice three VERBS (two the same) reappear in Ps. 77:11-12. Faith takes time and thought! The trustworthiness of revelation and personal experience merge into settled conviction.

▣ **“song in the night”** Because of Ps. 42:8 this phrase may be an allusion to YHWH’s gracious actions which turn into night-time praises (both conscious and unconscious). The psalmist knew days and nights of praise and peace but his current experience was very different.

The UBS Text Project gives three possibilities to the term NASB translates “song” (BDB 618).

1. music – גִּיתָה (MT, NASB)
2. murmur/meditate – וְהִגִּיתִי (LXX, Peshitta, NJB)
3. sorrow – נִוְגְגָתִי (NEB)

▣ **“my spirit ponders”** The VERB is literally “searches” (BDB 344, KB 341, *Piel* IMPERFECT with *waw*). It is MASCULINE and “spirit” (BDB 924) is FEMININE. Therefore, it could refer to

1. the psalmist himself
2. God searching him (cf. Ps. 139:1,23)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 77:7-10

⁷Will the Lord reject forever?

And will He never be favorable again?

⁸Has His lovingkindness ceased forever?

Has His promise come to an end forever?

⁹Has God forgotten to be gracious,

Or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion? Selah.

¹⁰Then I said, “It is my grief,

That the right hand of the Most High has changed.”

77:7-10 This strophe is connected to the psalmist’s disturbing prayer of Ps. 77:1-6. He cannot understand. He asks a series of stark, scary questions that seem to question YHWH’s covenant promises and unchanging character! These are the most frightening questions in the OT! He apparently does not perceive that the problem might be the sin, idolatry, and covenant faithlessness of the covenant people.

The most distressing aspect to these questions is his false conclusion (i.e., Ps. 77:10)! YHWH has not changed (BDB 1039, KB 1597) but His people have!

Derek Kidner, *Tyndale OT Commentaries* (pp. 308-309) takes the view that Ps. 77:10 is a positive turning point verse, introducing Ps. 77:11-20. “Selah” appears at the end of Ps. 77:9, which may imply that Ps. 77:10-15 comprise a strophe (cf. NKJV, JPSOA). The tone of the Psalm surely changes at 77:11-20.

77:7-8 Psalm 77:7 and 8 have four words or phrases that describe the psalmist’s feeling that YHWH has permanently abandoned Israel.

1. forever, Ps. 77:7 – BDB 761
2. forever, Ps. 77:8 – BDB 664
3. ceased forever (lit. “are at an end”), Ps. 77:8 – BDB 170, KB 197, *Qal* PERFECT
4. come to an end, Ps. 77:8 – BDB 189 CONSTRUCT BDB 189

For #1 see Special Topic: Forever (‘*olam*). This repetition shows the fear and doubt of the psalmist.

77:8 “lovingkindness” See Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*).

77:10 “the Most High” This Hebrew title, “*Elyon*” (BDB 71, see Special Topic: Names for Deity) is from the word “high” or “upper.” It was used of God in Gen. 14:18-22; Num. 24:16; Deut. 32:8 by non-Israelites.

This Psalm uses several different names for Deity.

1. *Elohim*, Ps. 77:1 (twice), 3, 13,16
2. *Adonai*, Ps. 77:2, 7 (lit. “my Lord”)
3. Most High, Ps. 77:10
4. *Yah*, Ps. 77:11 (abbreviation for YHWH)
5. *El*, Ps. 77:9, 13, 14 (general name for deity in the ANE)



NASB, NRSV	“It is my grief”
NKJV	“It is my anguish”
NJB	“This is what wounds me”
JPSOA	“It is my fault”
Peshitta	“This is my infirmity”

There is disagreement among modern scholars as to the Hebrew root.

1. חלה, BDB 317 I – “to sicken” (NASB, NRSV, TEV, NET, REB, Peshitta)
2. חלה, BDB 318 II – “to entreat the favor of” (NIV)
3. חלל, BDB 319 – “to pierce” (NJB, UBS Text Project’s suggestion, “my being wounded,” p. 333)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 77:11-15

**¹¹I shall remember the deeds of the LORD;
Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.
¹²I will meditate on all Your work
And muse on Your deeds.
¹³Your way, O God, is holy;
What god is great like our God?
¹⁴You are the God who works wonders;
You have made known Your strength among the peoples.
¹⁵You have by Your power redeemed Your people,
The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.**

77:11-15 The psalmist again tries to focus on YHWH’s past acts (cf. Ps. 77:11-12, 14-15). He refocuses on His unchanging, unique character (cf. Ps. 77:13, see Special Topic: Monotheism).

Note the purposeful parallel of the VERBS in Ps. 77:11-12 to those of Ps. 77:6.

77:11 “wonders” It denotes YHWH’s acts of creation and deliverance. See Special Topic: Wonderful Things. The same word (BDB 810) is used in Ps. 77:14 and the same root in Ps. 78:4,11,32; 107:8,15,21,24,31; 119:18,27.

77:13 “Your way” The term “way” (BDB 202) speaks of

1. His revelation, cf. Ps. 119:14; Jer. 18:15, see Special Topic: Terms for God’s Revelation
2. His characteristic actions (i.e., Ps. 119:3)

▣ **“holy”** This could refer to

1. God’s character
2. God’s temple

SPECIAL TOPIC: Holy

- 77:14-15** Notice the parallelism between Ps. 77:14b and 15a. However, there is a distinction between
1. Your strength among the peoples (i.e., non-Israelites, see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan)
 2. Your arm redeemed Your people (i.e., Israelites)

77:15 “redeemed” See Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 77:16-20

- ¹⁶**The waters saw You, O God;
The waters saw You, they were in anguish;
The deeps also trembled.**
- ¹⁷**The clouds poured out water;
The skies gave forth a sound;
Your arrows flashed here and there.**
- ¹⁸**The sound of Your thunder was in the whirlwind;
The lightnings lit up the world;
The earth trembled and shook.**
- ¹⁹**Your way was in the sea
And Your paths in the mighty waters,
And Your footprints may not be known.**
- ²⁰**You led Your people like a flock
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.**

77:16-20 The psalmist looks backwards to Genesis (cf. Ps. 77:15) and to the Exodus (cf. Ps. 77:20). The God of creation has become the warrior of Israel!

The Psalm does not state the psalmist's final conclusion. Hopefully, his remembrance and meditation on YHWH's person and acts caused him to reject his conclusion/question of Ps. 77:10.

77:16 “the waters”

SPECIAL TOPIC: Waters

77:20a This phrase is characteristic of Asaph's Psalms (cf. Ps. 74:1; 78:52,70-76; 79:13; 80:2). What a beautiful title (i.e., Shepherd) for the Creator/Redeemer God! He is with us and for us (cf. Psalm 23).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Is this Psalm an individual lament or a national lament?
2. Why are Ps. 77:7-10 so theologically significant??
3. Is Ps. 77:10 a positive message or a negative message?
4. Does this Psalm use imagery from creation or the exodus?

PSALM 78

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Guidance of His People in Spite of Their Unfaithfulness <u>MT Intro</u> Maskil of Asaph.	God's Kindness to Rebellious Israel	The Story of God's Great Deeds and His People's Faithlessness	God and His People	The Lessons of Israelite History
78:1-4	78:1-4	78:1-4	78:1-4	78:1-2 78:3-4b 78:4c-5b
78:5-8	78:5-8	78:5-8	78:5-8	78:5c-6b 78:6c-7 78:8
78:9-16	78:9-11 78:12-16	78:9-16	78:9-16	78:9-10 78:11-12 78:13-14 78:15-16
78:17-20	78:17-20	78:17-20	78:17-20	78:17-18 78:19-20
78:21-33	78:21-25 78:26-31	78:21-31	78:21-31	78:21-22 78:23-25 78:26-28 78:29-31
78:34-39	78:32-33 78:34-39	78:32-55	78:32-37 78:38-39	78:32-33 78:34-35 78:36-37 78:38-39
78:40-53	78:40-55		78:40-51	78:40-42 78:43-44 78:45-46 78:47-48 78:49-50a 78:50b-51
78:54-64	78:56-64	78:56-66	78:52-55 78:56-64	78:52-53 78:54-55 78:56-60

				78:61-62
				78:63-64
78:65-72	78:65-66		78:65-69	78:65-66
	78:67-72	78:67-72		78:67-69
			78:70-72	78:70-72

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm affirms the need to pass on the faith to the next generation (Ps. 78:1-4, 5-8).
 1. God's acts
 2. God's revelations
- B. This Psalm documents the faithful acts of God and the faithless acts of Israel.
 1. the exodus
 2. the wilderness wandering
 3. the conquest

- C. Possibly the best way to see the parallels and allusions is a chart of verses related to other OT texts.

Ps. 78: 12b – Num. 13:22	Ps. 78: 42 – Jdgs. 8:24
Ps. 78: 13 – Exod. 14:16,21	Ps. 78: 43 – Exod. 4:21; 7:3
Ps. 78: 14 – Exod. 13:21	Ps. 78: 45 – Exod. 8:6,24
Ps. 78: 15 – Exod. 17:6; Deut. 8:15	Ps. 78: 46 – Exod. 10:14
Ps. 78: 16 – Num. 20:8,10,11	Ps. 78: 47 – Exod. 9:23
Ps. 78: 18 – Num. 11:4	Ps. 78: 48 – Exod. 9:19
Ps. 78: 19 – Exod. 16:3; Num. 11:4; 20:3; 21:5	Ps. 78: 49 – Exod. 15:7
Ps. 78: 20 – Num. 11:18	Ps. 78: 50 – Exod. 12:29,30
Ps. 78: 21 – Num. 11:1	Ps. 78: 52 – Exod. 15:22
Ps. 78: 22 – Deut. 1:32; 9:23	Ps. 78: 53 – Exod. 14:19,20,27,28
Ps. 78: 24 – Exod. 16:4	Ps. 78: 54 – Exod. 15:17
Ps. 78: 25 – Exod. 16:3	Ps. 78: 58 – Exod. 20:4; Lev. 26:1,30; Deut. 4:25; 32:16,21
Ps. 78: 26 – Num. 11:31	Ps. 78: 59 – Lev. 26:30; Deut. 1:34; 9:19; 32:19
Ps. 78: 27 – Exod. 16:13	Ps. 78: 60 – 1 Sam. 4:11
Ps. 78: 29 – Num. 11:19,20	Ps. 78: 61 – 1 Sam. 4:17
Ps. 78: 31 – Num. 11:33,34	Ps. 78: 62 – 1 Sam. 4:10
Ps. 78: 32 – Num. 14:11,16-17	Ps. 78: 63 – Num. 11:1; 21:28
Ps. 78: 33 – Num. 14:29,35	Ps. 78: 64 – 1 Sam. 4:17; 22:18
Ps. 78: 34 – Num. 21:7	Ps. 78: 66 – 1 Sam. 5:6
Ps. 78: 35 – Exod. 15:13; Deut. 9:26; 32:4	Ps. 78: 69 – 1 Kings 6
Ps. 78: 36 – Exod. 24:7,8; 32:7,8	Ps. 78: 70 – 1 Sam. 16:12
Ps. 78: 38 – Exod. 34:6; Num. 14:20	Ps. 78: 71 – 1 Sam. 10:1; 2 Sam. 5:2; 7:8
Ps. 78: 41 – Exod. 14:22	Ps. 78: 72 – 1 Kgs. 9:4

- D. The best parallel of this overview of Israel's faithlessness and YHWH's faithfulness is Nehemiah 9 (also note Acts 7).

1. call of Abraham – Ps. 78:6-8
2. exodus – Ps. 78:9-14
3. wilderness wanderings – Ps. 78:15-21
4. conquest – Ps. 78: 22-25
5. judges – Ps. 78: 26-31

Also note Psalms 105-106 are also about God's faithfulness and Israel's unfaithfulness!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 78:1-4

- ¹Listen, O my people, to my instruction;
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
²I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings of old,

³Which we have heard and known,
 And our fathers have told us.
⁴We will not conceal them from their children,
 But tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,
 And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.

78:1-4 The psalmist implores the covenant people to hear and respond appropriately to God’s revelation (cf. Ps. 78: 4c). He also implores them to pass on the truths to their children and grandchildren and so on to each new generation (cf. Deut. 4:9-10; 6:7,20-25; 11:19; 32:46).

78:1 There are two IMPERATIVES.

1. listen (lit. “hear”) – BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. incline your ears (lit. “turn”) – BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

▣ **“instruction”** This is literally “teaching” (BDB 435). This is parallel to “the words of my mouth.” There are several different Hebrew words used in this Psalm for YHWH’s revelation.

1. instruction/teaching, Ps. 78:1 – BDB 435
2. testimony, Ps. 78:5 – BDB 730
3. law, Ps. 78:5,10 – BDB 435
4. commandment, Ps. 78:51 – BDB 846
5. testimonies, Ps. 78:56 – BDB 729 I

See Special Topic: Terms For God’s Revelation.

This Psalm is written to the covenant people (usually the Psalms are addressed to God). It seems this historical survey was used (read) in an annual feast or ceremony at the temple to encourage God’s people to learn from the past and live appropriately as God’s people.

78:2 “parable. . .dark sayings”

1. parable – BDB 605
2. dark saying – BDB 295

The VERB and NOUN forms of both these words are found in Ezek. 17:2. I have included my notes from there below.

Ezek. 17:2 This verse has two parallel IMPERATIVES.

1. “propound a riddle,” BDB 295, KB 295, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Jdgs. 14:12-19
2. “speak a parable,” BDB 605 II, KB 647, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 12:23; 16:44; 17:2; 18:2; 20:49; 24:3

The term “riddle” (BDB 295, note the relation of the VERB, BDB 295, and NOUN, BDB 295) means a statement that needs to have some information hinted at or supplied to be understood (cf. Pro. 1:6).

The term “parable” (BDB 605 II, note the relation of the VERB, BDB 605 II, and NOUN, BDB 605 II) implies a brief poetic structure, possibly a proverb which uses comparison as a way to illustrate truth.

Ezekiel has been using highly figurative language to convince the exiles of the just and sure judgment of Jerusalem.

YHWH is not trying to hide truth but assert that the key to understanding comes from His speakers/prophets. The past acts of God need to be interpreted fresh for every generation.

Jesus quotes this verse in Matt. 13:35. He uses it to explain why the crowds did not understand His teachings. He, too, reinterpreted Israel's past. He asserted that the ultimate focus of Israel's history was Himself! However, this amazing truth was not immediately self evident but had to be revealed! He was the true, ultimate revealer (cf. Matt. 5:17-19,21-48)! As Israel refused to see YHWH's will and purpose in her history, so too, Jesus' generation lived out the prophecies of Isa. 6:9-10; 29:13. They were like the Israelites of Ps. 78:8!

78:4 Each generation must teach their children about God. This is a recurrent emphasis in Deuteronomy. I have included my notes from **Deut. 4:9** and **6:7**.

4:9 “teach their children” This is a recurrent theme in Deuteronomy (cf. Deut. 4:10; 6:7, 20-25; 11:19; 31:13; 32:46; and note Exod. 10:2; 12:26; 13:8,14). If believers do not teach their children about God, they are failures as parents (biblically speaking)! Faith runs through families (cf. Deut. 5:10; 7:9)!

6:7 “you shall teach them diligently to your sons” The VERB (BDB 1041, KB 1606, *Piel* PERFECT) means “to sharpen” and in *Piel* this is the only usage. The term in Ugaritic means “to repeat.” That seems to be the basic emphasis of this verse. The rabbis use this verse to assert that the *Shema* should be “repeated” morning and evening. We are to talk about God's will for our lives during the entire scope of daily activities. It is the responsibility of parents to pass on lifestyle faith (cf. Deut. 4:9; 6:20-25; 11:19; 32:46, see full note at 4:9). It is interesting that the flow of these different times for teaching falls into the same literary pattern as Ps. 139:2-6 and Pro. 6:20-22. This emphasis on parental responsibility is repeated in Pro. 22:6. Our modern day church school cannot take the place of parental training but it surely can supplement it!

▣ **“His strength and His wondrous works”** This Psalm has several different terms to describe YHWH's acts of revelation and deliverance.

1. Ps. 78:4
 - a. the glorious deeds (lit. “praises”) – BDB 239, #4, cf. Ps. 9:14; 35:28; 79:13; 102:21; 106:2,47; Isa. 43:21; 60:6; 63:7
 - b. His strength – BDB 739, cf. Ps. 145:6
 - c. His wondrous works – BDB 810, KB 927, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Micah 7:15, see Special Topic: Wonderful Things
2. Ps. 78:7 – the works of God – BDB 760, cf. Ps. 77:11,12; Micah 2:7
3. Ps. 78:11
 - a. His deeds – BDB 760, same as #2, and verse 32
 - b. His miracles – BDB 810, same as #1, c
4. Ps. 78:12 – His wonders – BDB 810, same as #1, c
5. Ps. 78:32 – His wonderful works – BDB 810, same as #1, c and Ps. 78:11
6. Ps. 78:42 – His power (lit. “hand”) – BDB 388, cf. Special Topic: Hand
7. Ps. 78:43
 - a. His signs – BDB 16, #4, cf. Exod. 10:2; Ps. 65:8
 - b. His marvels – BDB 68, #1, cf. Deut. 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 29:2; 34:11; Neh. 9:10; Ps. 105:27; 135:9; Jer. 32:20-21
8. Ps. 78:54 – His right hand had gained – BDB 411, see Special Topic: Hand

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 78:5-8

⁵For He established a testimony in Jacob
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers
That they should teach them to their children,
⁶That the generation to come might know, *even* the children *yet* to be born,
That they may arise and tell *them* to their children,
⁷That they should put their confidence in God
And not forget the works of God,
But keep His commandments,
⁸And not be like their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation,
A generation that did not prepare its heart
And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

78:5-8 This strophe emphasizes the need for each generation of faithful followers to pass on their faith and understanding of God's will to their families (see notes at Ps. 78:4).

Faithful followers are characterized as

1. putting their confidence (lit. "hope," BDB 492) in God
2. not forgetting His works, cf. Deut. 4:9,23; 31:6,12; 8:11,14,19 (twice); 9:7; 25:19
3. keeping His commandments, cf. Deut. 4:2,6,10; 5:1,10,29,32; 6:2,3,17,25; 7:9,11,12; 27:1; Jos. 22:5

Psalm 78:7 is the positive theme of the entire Psalm and 78:8 is a powerful warning of what not to do!

78:8 Even with all YHWH had done for the descendants of Abraham, they still were faithless (i.e., 2 Chr. 30:7; Ezek. 20:13,18). Psalm 78:8 contrasts the faithless with the faithful.

1. stubborn – BDB 710, KB 770, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Deut. 9:6,13; 10:16; 31:27
2. rebellious – BDB 598, KB 632, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Deut. 9:34; 31:27
3. did not prepare their hearts – BDB 465, KB 464, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 78:37
4. whose spirit was not faithful to God – BDB 52, KB 63, *Niphal* PERFECT

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 78:9-16

⁹The sons of Ephraim were archers equipped with bows,
Yet they turned back in the day of battle.
¹⁰They did not keep the covenant of God
And refused to walk in His law;
¹¹They forgot His deeds
And His miracles that He had shown them.
¹²He wrought wonders before their fathers
In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.
¹³He divided the sea and caused them to pass through,
And He made the waters stand up like a heap.
¹⁴Then He led them with the cloud by day

And all the night with a light of fire.

¹⁵He split the rocks in the wilderness

And gave *them* abundant drink like the ocean depths.

¹⁶He brought forth streams also from the rock

And caused waters to run down like rivers.

78:9-16 This strophe alludes to the exodus. Some of the allusions are unclear (i.e., Ps. 78:9), but many are (Contextual Insights, C) very clear.

Ephraim may be a way of referring to the Northern Tribes. Joseph and Joshua were both from the tribe of Ephraim, which numerically was the largest tribe. Ephraim and Manasseh were both sons of Joseph by an Egyptian mother. Jacob blessed Ephraim above the firstborn Manasseh (cf. Gen. 48:14-20).

78:10 Note the VERBS “keep” (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* PERFECT, negated) and “walk” (BDB 229, KB 246) are parallel and describe covenant life. Obedience to the Mosaic covenant was crucial (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30).

78:11 The current generation of the Israelites forgot all that YHWH had done for them during the exodus (cf. Deut. 8:11-20). So in the verses that follow many of YHWH’s mighty acts of deliverance are enumerated.

78:12 “Zoan” This term (BDB 858) is from an Egyptian root for “stronghold.” This stronghold/fort was located in the Delta region of Egypt, also known as Goshen (eastern Nile Delta), where the Israelites settled in Joseph’s day. The city was known by different names in different periods.

1. Zoan (cf. Num. 13:22)
2. Tannis
3. Avaris
4. Rameses (named after Rameses II, cf. Exod. 1:11; 12:37; Num. 33:3)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 78:17-20

**¹⁷Yet they still continued to sin against Him,
To rebel against the Most High in the desert.**

**¹⁸And in their heart they put God to the test
By asking food according to their desire.**

**¹⁹Then they spoke against God;
They said, “Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?”**

**²⁰Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out,
And streams were overflowing;
Can He give bread also?
Will He provide meat for His people?”**

78:17-20 This strophe continues to describe the acts of the ungrateful, disobedient Israelites of the exodus and wilderness wandering period.

78:18 “they put God to the test” The VERB (BDB 650, KB 702, *Piel* IMPERFECT with *waw*) is used several times of Israel testing God (cf. Exod. 17:2; Num. 14:22; Deut. 6:16; Ps. 78:18,41,56; 95:9; 106:14).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 78:21-33

- ²¹Therefore the LORD heard and was full of wrath;
And a fire was kindled against Jacob
And anger also mounted against Israel,
²²Because they did not believe in God
And did not trust in His salvation.
²³Yet He commanded the clouds above
And opened the doors of heaven;
²⁴He rained down manna upon them to eat
And gave them food from heaven.
²⁵Man did eat the bread of angels;
He sent them food in abundance.
²⁶He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens
And by His power He directed the south wind.
²⁷When He rained meat upon them like the dust,
Even winged fowl like the sand of the seas,
²⁸Then He let *them* fall in the midst of their camp,
Round about their dwellings.
²⁹So they ate and were well filled,
And their desire He gave to them.
³⁰Before they had satisfied their desire,
While their food was in their mouths,
³¹The anger of God rose against them
And killed some of their stoutest ones,
And subdued the choice men of Israel.
³²In spite of all this they still sinned
And did not believe in His wonderful works.
³³So He brought their days to an end in futility
And their years in sudden terror.

78:21-33 Israel's continued disobedience causes YHWH to judge them. One example used is YHWH's supernatural provisions of meat (quail). He told them how to receive His blessing but again they disobeyed (cf. Numbers 11). Their actions showed their attitude toward YHWH.

1. they did not believe, Ps. 78:22
2. they did not trust, Ps. 78:22
3. in spite of all this they still sinned, Ps. 78:32

78:22 "believe. . .trust" See Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT.

78:23 "opened the doors of heaven" The "heavens" (see Special Topic: Heaven and Special Topic: Heaven and the Third Heaven) were thought of as a dome covered with skin, like a drum. This dome separated the waters above from falling to earth. They were imagined to have windows that could be opened or shut, depending on God's will and mankind's actions (cf. Gen. 7:11; Mal. 3:10). God could provide

1. rain (Genesis)
2. food (Psalm)
3. blessings (Malachi)

78:24-25 “food from heaven. . .the bread of angels” This is referring to manna (cf. Exodus 16). YHWH was gracious (cf. Ps. 78:38), but they were rebellious.

Manna (BDB 577 I) was a white substance that appeared as dew. The name may come from Exod. 16:4, “What is it?” It was a miraculous provision of food during the wilderness wandering period. It could be gathered for only one day at a time (God’s daily provision) or it went bad (cf. Exod. 16:16-21), except for the day before the Sabbath when enough for two days was gathered and did not turn bad (cf. Exod. 16:22-29). It was cooked like flour. It stopped when the Israelites crossed the Jordan (cf. Jos. 5:12).

78:27 “dust. . .sand” These are two of three terms (dust, sand, stars) used to describe something numerous. They are regularly connected to the numerous descendants of the Patriarchs (i.e., God’s promise to Abraham, cf. Gen. 12:2).

1. dust – Gen. 13:16; 28:14; Num. 23:10
2. sand – Gen. 22:17; 32:12; 2 Sam. 17:11; 1 Kgs. 4:20
3. stars – Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; Exod. 32:13; Deut. 1:10; 10:22; 28:62

78:29-31 God provided quail but the people again did not trust God’s provision and tried to gather a large quantity of birds for future consumption. This displeased God and His judgment fell on them (cf. Num. 11:31-35).

Again and again in the OT, God told His people what to do but they refused and did it their way. Every time this resulted in judgment! The issue was “trust”! And it still is!

78:33

NASB, NKJV	“end in futility”
NASB margin	“vanity, a mere breath”
NRSV	“vanish like a breath”
NJB	“vanish in midst”

This term (BDB 210 I) is a key term in Ecclesiastes. See my note below from Ecclesiastes 1.

Eccl. 1:2 “vanity of vanities” This is a Hebrew superlative (cf. 1:2 and 12:8). The word means “vapor,” “breath,” or “mist” (BDB 210 I, cf. James 4:14). Its emphasis is either (1) nothingness or (2) the transitoriness of human life. The context supports the latter (cf. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, p. 41).

This is a key term and recurrent phrase in this book (cf. Eccl. 1:2,14; 2:1,11,15,17,19,21, 23,26; 3:19; 4:4,7,8,16; 5:7,10; 6:2,4,9,11,12; 7:6,15; 8:10,14; 9:9; 11:8,10; 12:8). The term is used sparingly in other wisdom books: Job, 5 times; Psalms, 9 times; and Proverbs, 3 times.

For different theories about how it views the strong statements in this book, see Introduction, Authorship, H. I prefer option #1. This theological presupposition will be the grid through which I interpret the book.

☐ **“all is vanity”** Notice the root, “vanity” (BDB 210 I), is used five times in this one verse! *The Handbook on Ecclesiastes* by UBS, says the term should be understood as

1. incomprehensible
2. enigmatic
3. mysterious

4. impossible to understand

Therefore, it communicates the reality that life is full of unanswerable questions (p. 4). The person knowledgeable in wisdom will know this, but will continue to trust God and keep His commandments.

This refers to the uncertain and unpredictable activities of life. These are a result of fallen humanity trying to live life in their own strength, independent from God. This is the condition left by the Fall (cf. Genesis 3)!

The Hebrew term “all” (BDB 481), often translated “everything,” is a common word, but is used often in Ecclesiastes (i.e., 9 times in chapter 1; 17 times in chapter 2; 13 times in chapter 3, etc.). *Qohелеth* uses this inclusive language to express his theological emphasis on

1. God’s control and sovereignty
2. human ineffectiveness and transitoriness

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 78:34-39

³⁴**When He killed them, then they sought Him,
And returned and searched diligently for God;**
³⁵**And they remembered that God was their rock,
And the Most High God their Redeemer.**
³⁶**But they deceived Him with their mouth
And lied to Him with their tongue.**
³⁷**For their heart was not steadfast toward Him,
Nor were they faithful in His covenant.**
³⁸**But He, being compassionate, forgave *their* iniquity and did not destroy *them*;
And often He restrained His anger
And did not arouse all His wrath.**
³⁹**Thus He remembered that they were but flesh,
A wind that passes and does not return.**

78:34-39 This strophe describes the false repentance of the surviving Israelites and YHWH’s reaction to it.

1. the seeming repentance, Ps. 78:34-35
 - a. they sought Him
 - b. they returned to Him
 - c. they searched diligently for Him
 - d. they remembered God was their rock/redeemer
2. their true thoughts/actions (Ps. 78:36-37)
 - a. they deceived Him by lying (Ps. 78:36 a and b, cf. Isa. 29:13)
 - b. their hearts were not steadfast toward Him
 - c. they were not faithful to His covenant
3. YHWH’s reactions (Ps. 78:38-39)
 - a. He is compassionate (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8, see Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God)
 - b. He forgave (lit. “covered over,” BDB 497, KB 493, *Piel* IMPERFECT)
 - c. He did not destroy them
 - d. He restrained (lit. “turned away”) His anger
 - e. He did not arouse all His wrath

f. He remembered that they were but flesh (cf. Ps. 103:14) which is here today and gone tomorrow

Psalms 78:38-39 does not mean that they were not judged (cf. Ps. 78:34a), but that YHWH did not completely destroy them.

Psalms 78:38-39 is used in many rabbinical writings. It is a summary of the character of God (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8-14).

78:35 Notice the different names and titles for Deity.

1. *Elohim* (BDB 43, KB 52)
2. their rock (cf. Ps. 18:2; 19:14)
3. *El* (BDB 42, KB 48)
4. *Elyon* (BDB 751, KB 832)
5. their redeemer (cf. Ps. 19:14)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 78:40-53

⁴⁰How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness
And grieved Him in the desert!

⁴¹Again and again they tempted God,
And pained the Holy One of Israel.

⁴²They did not remember His power,
The day when He redeemed them from the adversary,

⁴³When He performed His signs in Egypt
And His marvels in the field of Zoan,

⁴⁴And turned their rivers to blood,
And their streams, they could not drink.

⁴⁵He sent among them swarms of flies which devoured them,
And frogs which destroyed them.

⁴⁶He gave also their crops to the grasshopper
And the product of their labor to the locust.

⁴⁷He destroyed their vines with hailstones
And their sycamore trees with frost.

⁴⁸He gave over their cattle also to the hailstones
And their herds to bolts of lightning.

⁴⁹He sent upon them His burning anger,
Fury and indignation and trouble,
A band of destroying angels.

⁵⁰He leveled a path for His anger;
He did not spare their soul from death,
But gave over their life to the plague,

⁵¹And smote all the firstborn in Egypt,
The first issue of their virility in the tents of Ham.

⁵²But He led forth His own people like sheep
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock;

⁵³He led them safely, so that they did not fear;

But the sea engulfed their enemies.

78:40-53 There seems to be a confusion in this strophe between YHWH's judgment on the Israelites (cf. Ps. 78:40-42) and His judgment on Egypt during the exodus. The plagues alluded to in Ps. 78:43-51 were directed at the recalcitrant Egyptian leadership.

Instead of YHWH judging faithless Israel (i.e., wilderness wandering period, cf. Ps. 78:40-43), He was a shepherd to them (cf. Ps. 78:52-53).

Notice how Israel's faithlessness is characterized.

1. they rebelled against Him, Ps. 78:40
2. they grieved Him, Ps. 78:40
3. they tempted Him, Ps. 78:41
4. they pained Him, Ps. 78:41
5. they did not remember His power/signs/marvels, Ps. 78:42

78:44-51 These verses describe the plagues on Egypt.

1. water/river to blood – Exod. 7:17-19
2. flies – Exod. 8:16-18
3. frogs – Exod. 8:2-6
4. grasshopper/locusts – Exod. 8:21; 10:4-6
5. hailstones – Exod. 9:18
6. plague/sickness – Exod. 9:8-10
7. death of firstborn – Exodus 11

The order and number are not exact but obviously the ten plagues of Exodus 7-11 are what is being referred to, unless they became idioms of YHWH's judgment.

78:49 This verse uses a litany of terms to describe God's wrath (Ps. 78:38).

1. burning anger – BDB 354 CONSTRUCT BDB 60 I
2. fury – BDB 720
3. indignation – BDB 276
4. trouble – BDB 865
5. a band of destroying angels

Number 5 is an idiom which personifies God's elements of wrath. In the Exodus account of the death of the firstborn in the unmarked homes, it is God who Himself causes the event (cf. Exod. 11:4; 12:12). This later became Judaism's understanding of "the Death Angel" (i.e., Samael or Azrael), but the Bible does not specifically mention him, although 2 Sam. 24:16; 2 Kgs. 19:35; 1 Chr. 21:15; Isa. 37:36, do imply one. The rabbis also assert that Ps. 89:48 refers to him (i.e., Targum, "seeing the angel of death"). The theological point is that God, not Satan or an angel, controls death!

78:50 This is an idiom for the preparation for an action. The next two lines show that in this case it was YHWH's judgment.

78:52 God as shepherd is a recurrent theme in the Psalms of Asaph. See note at Ps. 77:20.

78:53 This verse has two historical allusions.

1. “led them” refers to the *Shekinah* cloud of glory that guided the Israelites (cf. Exod. 13:21; 14:19,24; 33:9,10)
2. “the sea engulfed their enemies” refers to the splitting of the Red Sea and then its returning water drowning Egypt’s elite soldiers and chariots (cf. Exodus 14-15)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 78:54-64

- ⁵⁴So He brought them to His holy land,
To this hill country which His right hand had gained.
- ⁵⁵He also drove out the nations before them
And apportioned them for an inheritance by measurement,
And made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents.
- ⁵⁶Yet they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God
And did not keep His testimonies,
- ⁵⁷But turned back and acted treacherously like their fathers;
They turned aside like a treacherous bow.
- ⁵⁸For they provoked Him with their high places
And aroused His jealousy with their graven images.
- ⁵⁹When God heard, He was filled with wrath
And greatly abhorred Israel;
- ⁶⁰So that He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh,
The tent which He had pitched among men,
- ⁶¹And gave up His strength to captivity
And His glory into the hand of the adversary.
- ⁶²He also delivered His people to the sword,
And was filled with wrath at His inheritance.
- ⁶³Fire devoured His young men,
And His virgins had no wedding songs.
- ⁶⁴His priests fell by the sword,
And His widows could not weep.

78:54-64 This strophe recounts the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). The Canaanite tribes (see Special Topic: Pre-Israelite Inhabitants of Palestine) were defeated and removed by God because of their sin. Tragically the same thing happens to the Israelite tribes.

78:55b The book of Joshua, chapters 12-19, describes the divine allotment of the land to Jacob’s children.

78:56-58 These lines of poetry describe Israel’s sin and rebellion, which is all the more terrible because of all that God had done for them (cf. Luke 12:48).

1. they tempted God, Ps. 78:56a
2. they rebelled against God, Ps. 78:56a
3. they did not keep His covenant, Ps. 78:56b
4. they turned their backs to Him, Ps. 78:57a
5. they acted treacherously as their fathers did, Ps. 78:57a
6. they turned aside like a treacherous bow, Ps. 78:57b

7. they provoked Him with Canaanite idolatry, Ps. 78:58a
8. they aroused His jealousy with graven images, Ps. 78:58b

78:59-64 These verses describe what God did to Israel in light of their actions (Ps. 78:56-58).

1. He was filled with wrath
2. He greatly abhorred Israel
3. He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh (cf. 1 Sam. 4:11)
4. He allowed Israel to be defeated
5. He delivered Israel to the sword
6. He was filled with wrath at His inheritance
 - a. fire devoured the young men
 - b. the virgins had no wedding
 - c. the priests were killed
 - d. the widows wept

Human choices have consequences, both temporal and eternal!

78:62 “His inheritance” This is a parallel to “His people” (cf. Ps. 106:40). The origin of this imagery is Deut. 9:29. It, like so many other images, is family oriented.

78:63 “fire” See Special Topic: Fire.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 78:65-72

- ⁶⁵Then the Lord awoke as *if from sleep*,
 Like a warrior overcome by wine.
⁶⁶He drove His adversaries backward;
 He put on them an everlasting reproach.
⁶⁷He also rejected the tent of Joseph,
 And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim,
⁶⁸But chose the tribe of Judah,
 Mount Zion which He loved.
⁶⁹And He built His sanctuary like the heights,
 Like the earth which He has founded forever.
⁷⁰He also chose David His servant
 And took him from the sheepfolds;
⁷¹From the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him
 To shepherd Jacob His people,
 And Israel His inheritance.
⁷²So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart,
 And guided them with his skillful hands.

78:65-72 This concluding strophe describes how God turned from wrath to continue His redemptive purposes (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan).

1. God is described as a person who comes to his senses (see Special Topic: God Described as Human)
2. He defeats the adversaries of His people

3. He gives them an everlasting reproach
4. He reorients the order of the tribes as to places of leadership
 - a. rejects Joseph and Ephraim
 - b. chooses the tribe of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:8-12; Deut. 33:7)
5. He chooses to locate the temple in Judah on Mt. Moriah (called Zion)
6. He chooses David as His special leader (and his descendants, cf. 2 Samuel 7)
 - a. described as a shepherd
 - b. has a heart of integrity
 - c. has skillful hands

With the allusion to God's rejection of the Northern Tribes and choice of Judah, it seems this Psalm's final form was written after the fall of Israel/Ephraim/Samaria in 722 B.C. to Assyria.

This strophe is a good example of how God asserts His sovereignty. The cultural expectation is altered to show God's control.

1. Judah not Ephraim
2. Zion not Shiloh
3. David not other sons of Jesse

This is similar theologically to the Patriarchs all marrying barren women. Their children were supernatural–natural gifts from God. He is in control of time, space, history, election, and salvation!

PSALM 79

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Lament Over the Destruction of Jerusalem, and Prayer for Help <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of Asaph	A Dirge and A Prayer for Israel, Destroyed by Enemies	Prayer for Deliverance from National Enemies	A Prayer for the Nation's Deliverance	National Lament
79:1-7	79:1-7	79:1-4	79:1-7	79:1-2 79:3-5 79:6-7
79:8-13	79:8-10	79:8-10	79:8-10	79:8-9 79:10-11
	79:11-12	79:11-13	79:11-13	79:12-13
	79:13			

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 79:1-7

¹O GOD, the nations have invaded Your inheritance;
They have defiled Your holy temple;
They have laid Jerusalem in ruins.

**²They have given the dead bodies of Your servants for food to the birds of the heavens,
The flesh of Your godly ones to the beasts of the earth.**

**³They have poured out their blood like water round about Jerusalem;
And there was no one to bury them.**

**⁴We have become a reproach to our neighbors,
A scoffing and derision to those around us.**

**⁵How long, O LORD? Will You be angry forever?
Will Your jealousy burn like fire?**

**⁶Pour out Your wrath upon the nations which do not know You,
And upon the kingdoms which do not call upon Your name.**

**⁷For they have devoured Jacob
And laid waste his habitation.**

79:1-3 These verses delineate what the Gentile invaders have done to the covenant people (PERFECTS).

1. invaded Your inheritance (lit. “came in”) – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* PERFECT
2. defiled Your holy temple – BDB 379, KB 375, *Piel* PERFECT
3. laid Jerusalem in ruins (lit. “put,” “place,” “set”) – BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* PERFECT
4. given the dead bodies. . .for food to the birds – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECTS, cf. Jer. 7:33; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20
5. poured out their blood – BDB 1049, KB 1629, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 79:6, 10
6. there was no one to bury them – BDB 868, KB1064, *Qal* PARTICIPLE

The Jews could not understand how their God could allow the invasion of the land and defilement of the temple (i.e., Habakkuk). It seemed to question His:

1. power
2. promises
3. purpose for Israel

Psalm 79:8-13 gives the answer (cf. Dan. 9:1-14).

79:1 “O GOD” This is the first of several VOCATIVES.

1. O God (*Elohim*), Ps. 79:1
2. O LORD (YHWH), Ps. 79:5
3. O God (*Elyon*), Ps. 79:9
4. O Lord (*Adonai*), Ps. 79:12

The AB adds two more (p. 249).

5. O God, Ps. 79:6
6. O Scribe, Ps. 79:8

▣ **“Your inheritance”** Notice the number of times the psalmist accentuates that the objects of attack belong to YHWH.

1. Your inheritance, Ps. 79:1
2. Your temple, Ps. 79:1
3. Your servants, Ps. 79:2, 10
4. for the glory of Your name, Ps. 79:9
5. for Your name’s sake, Ps. 79:9
6. Your people, Ps. 79:13
7. sheep of Your pasture, Ps. 79:13

▣ **“in ruins”** This is a rare term (BDB 730) which is used twice in Micah.

1. for the destruction of Samaria, Mic. 1:6
2. for the destruction of Jerusalem, Mic. 3:12 (quoted in Jer. 26:18)

This Psalm seems to reflect the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. (see 2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36 and Lamentations).

79:2 To be improperly buried was a horror to ANE people. To be eaten by animals was a fearful prospect (cf. Jer. 7:33; 8:2; 34:20; Ezek. 29:5; 32:4-6; 33:27; 39:4-5, 17-20). Psalm 79:2 is a fulfillment of the curse for disobedience in Deut. 28:26!

SPECIAL TOPIC: Burial Practices

79:3 The first line of this verse alludes to the ritual procedure where the blood of sacrifices was poured out at the base of the altar of sacrifice after a small amount was smeared on the horns of the altar (i.e., Lev. 4:7). Jerusalem was destroyed as a ritual sacrifice and the bodies of the dead as a banquet for the wild animals.

79:4 The covenant people have become

1. a reproach (lit. “a taunt,” BDB 357) to their Gentile neighbors, cf. Ps. 44:13; 69:9, 19; 80:6; 89:41
2. a scoffing (lit. “mocked,” BDB 541), cf. Ps. 44:13; Ezek. 23:32; 36:4
3. a derision, cf. Ps. 44:13; Jer. 20:8 (NOUN, BDB 887, used only three times and the VERB form four more in the OT)

This was exactly opposite to YHWH’s purpose for Israel, which was to help the nations know Him and come to Him (cf. Ezek. 36:22-23).

79:5 These three questions,

1. How long? (cf. Ps. 13:1; 74:10; 80:4; 89:46; 90:13; 94:3)
2. Will You be angry forever? (cf. Ps. 44:23 74:1; 77:7; 85:5; 89:46)
3. Will Your jealousy burn like fire? (cf. Ps. 89:46)

are the focus of Israel’s confusion and prayer. Has YHWH’s special relationship with the descendants of Abraham changed (cf. Ps. 89:1-4)?

YHWH has an unchanging purpose for Israel (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30, see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan), but they must remember that the promises of protection, provision, and presence are conditional (see Special Topic: Covenant). Each generation must embrace and live out the covenant. Remember the Psalms are part of the OT’s “two ways” (cf. Deut. 30:15-20; Psalm 1).

79:6-7 This is a prayer (“pour out,” BDB 1049, KB 1629, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) for YHWH to act in judgment and deliverance (cf. Ps. 79:9) for His covenant people (cf. Jer. 10:25). Notice how the nations (BDB 156) are characterized.

1. which do not know You (see Special Topic: Know)
2. which do not call upon Your name (see Special Topic: Shadow as a Metaphor for Protection and Care)

It must be remembered that the nations

1. do not have true revelation
2. are controlled by the demonically inspired pagan idols

Israel was to be “the” channel of YHWH’s revelations about Himself. It is not surprising that the nations act in inappropriate ways (cf. Ps. 79:7). What is surprising is that Israel, with all the spiritual benefits (cf. Rom. 9:4-5), acts the way she does (cf. Luke 12:48)!

79:7 “For they have” The MT has “for he has,” but the ancient versions have “they” (LXX, Syriac, Vulgate). The change involves only a revocalization.



NASB, NRSV	“habitation”
NASB margin	“pasture”
NKJV	“dwelling places”
TEV	“country”
NJB, JPSOA	“home”
REB	“homeland”

This root (BDB 627) has several meanings.

1. abode of a shepherd (i.e., Jer. 33:12) or person (i.e., Job 18:15)
2. habitation of a nation (i.e., Jer. 31:23 – Judah; 49:20 – Edom; 50:45 – Babylon)
3. a city (cf. Isa. 33:20)
4. remote military outposts (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 55, i.e., Ps. 79:7; Isa. 27:10; Jer. 10:25; 25:30)
5. habitation (i.e., the earth, cf. Jer. 25:30)
6. place of rest (BDB 628, cf. Isa. 32:18 parallels)

Psalm 79:7 follows the usage of #2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 79:8-13

⁸Do not remember the iniquities of *our* forefathers against us;

Let Your compassion come quickly to meet us,

For we are brought very low.

⁹Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name;

And deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name’s sake.

¹⁰Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?”

Let there be known among the nations in our sight,

Vengeance for the blood of Your servants which has been shed.

¹¹Let the groaning of the prisoner come before You;

According to the greatness of Your power preserve those who are doomed to die.

¹²And return to our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom

The reproach with which they have reproached You, O Lord.

¹³So we Your people and the sheep of Your pasture

Will give thanks to You forever;

To all generations we will tell of Your praise.

79:8-9 Two significant issues emerge in these verses.

1. Israel’s prayer for God to remember His covenant
2. Israel’s prayer for God to not remember their continual covenant rebellion and disobedience

They base their prayers on the fact that the nations will misunderstand YHWH (cf. Ps. 79:10).

These two verses have four IMPERATIVES OF ENTREATY and two IMPERFECTS used as JUSSIVES.

1. do not remember – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. come quickly – BDB 554, KB 553, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. to meet us – BDB 869, KB 1068, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. help us – BDB 740, KB 810, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

5. deliver us – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
6. forgive our sin – BDB 497, KB 493, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

79:8 Line 1 is an allusion to the theological issue of the transference of sin (and/or blessing/forgiveness) to future generations. In the Ten Commandments

1. the results of sin are visited to the third and fourth generations (cf. Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9)
2. lovingkindness to many generations of those who love YHWH and keep His commandments (cf. Exod. 34:7; Deut. 5:10; 7:9)

Both the effects of sin and mercy move through time but each is based on human choices!

79:9 “O God of our salvation” This phrase is a repeated title for Israel’s God (cf. Ps. 18:46; 24:5; 25:5; 27:9; 65:5; 85:4).

The BDB lists several ways the term “salvation” (BDB 447) is used in the OT.

1. FEMININE
 - a. welfare, prosperity
 - b. deliverance
 - c. salvation from external evils (i.e., Ps. 78:22; 80:2)
 - d. victory (i.e., Ps. 20:5; 21:1,5; 44:4)
2. MASCULINE
 - a. safety, welfare, prosperity (i.e., Ps. 12:5)
 - b. salvation (usage here)
 - c. victory (i.e., Ps. 20:6)

79:10-13 Notice the two kinds of people (i.e., Israelite – Gentile). The Gentiles are ignorant of YHWH and they act in inappropriate ways. Israel pleads for judgment in order that His people may

1. “give thanks” – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
2. “tell of Your praise” – BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* IMPERFECT

It is shocking to see the pain of the psalmist over the fall of Jerusalem, the desecration of the temple, and the exile of the Davidic seed. However, by faith, he can still envision a future time of praise!

79:10 “Where is their God?” The nations ask a powerful question (cf. Ps. 42:3,10; 115:2). In Psalm 42 it is asked by other Israelites but in Psalm 115 and here, by Gentiles. Are they seeking information or ridiculing Israel’s God? The second option is obvious from the context but the first option is the ultimate purpose of God (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan).

79:11 “those who are doomed to die” This is a rare phrase (cf. Ps. 102:20). It could refer to

1. those exiled survivors of the invasion
2. those awaiting execution
3. those kept from the temple (JPSOA footnote, cf. Ps. 79:13)

79:12 “sevenfold” The number seven usually denotes “perfection” (see Special Topic: Symbolic Numbers in Scripture) but here it denotes a complete (cf. Deut. 28:25; Ps. 12:6; Pro. 6:31) judgment (cf. Gen. 4:15,24).

▣ **“into their bosom”** The term “bosom” (BDB 300) is used in many senses in the Bible. Here it denotes the inner part of a person (cf. Ps. 35:13; Jer. 32:18). The psalmist is praying for a complete judgment on the Gentile invaders (i.e., Isa. 65:6,7).

▣ **“The reproach with which they have reproached You”** The NOUN and VERB “reproach” or “taunt” (BDB 357, cf. Ps. 74:10,18 and a similar root in Ps. 74:22; Lam. 3:30,61; 5:1) is used often in Scripture. The psalmist sees an attack on Jerusalem as an attack on YHWH.

79:13 “the sheep of Your pasture” It is interesting that in the Psalms of Asaph this theme concludes Psalms 77, 78, and 79 (also note how Psalm 80 begins). It reflects the powerful, personal truth/imagery of Psalm 23!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is 586 B.C. the best guess at the historical setting of this Psalm?
2. Why was God angry at His people? In this Psalm who are His people?
3. Does sin move through generations?
4. How is Ps. 79:10 related to God’s eternal redemptive purpose? (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan).
5. How is Ps. 79:12b related to the prayer for forgiveness and deliverance?

PSALM 80

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God Implored to Rescue His People From Their Calamities <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; <i>set</i> to El Shoshannim; Eduth. A Psalm of Asaph	Prayer for Israel's Restoration	Prayer for Deliverance From National Enemies	A Prayer for The Nation's Restoration	Prayer for the Restoration of Israel
80:1-3	80:1-2	80:1-2	80:1-2	80:1-2
	80:3	80:3	80:3	80:3
80:4-7	80:4-6	80:4-6	80:4-6	80:4-6
	80:7	80:7	80:7	80:7
80:8-13	80:8-11	80:8-13	80:8-15	80:8-9
				80:10-11
	80:12-13			80:12-13
80:14-19	80:14-18	80:14-18		80:14-16
			80:16-18	
				80:17-18
	80:19	80:19	80:19	80:19

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Notice the different names/titles of Israel's Deity.
 1. Shepherd of Israel, Ps. 80:1 (see note at Ps. 23:1)
 2. O God (*Elohim*), Ps. 80:3

3. LORD (YHWH), Ps. 80:4,19
 4. God of hosts, Ps. 80:4,7,14,19
- See the Special Topic: Names For Deity.

- B. There is a chorus phrase that concludes several strophes: Ps. 80:1-3, 4-7, 14-19. It has two IMPERATIVES and one COHORTATIVE. It is a prayer for mercy, forgiveness, and restoration.
- C. There may be a “Messianic” reference related to
1. “shoot” (BDB 488), which may have theological connections to “Branch” (BDB 666, cf. Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5) and for “sprout” (BDB 855, cf. Jer. 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12)
 2. “the man of Your right hand”
 3. “the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself”
 4. and even possibly “Shepherd of Israel,” which would bring connotations of a Davidic seed
- The other option is that all the imagery relates to national Israel or Judah.
- D. Because of the placement of this Psalm (i.e., in the Psalms of Asaph) and Ps. 80:12-13 pointing toward an invasion of Judah, the date is possibly 586 B.C.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 80:1-3

¹Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel,
 You who lead Joseph like a flock;
 You who are enthroned *above* the cherubim, shine forth!
²Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Your power
 And come to save us!
³O God, restore us
 And cause Your face to shine *upon us*, and we will be saved.

80:1-3 This strophe is made up of a series of IMPERATIVES OF REQUEST.

1. give ear, Ps. 80:1 – BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. shine forth, Ps. 80:1 – BDB 422, KB 424, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. stir up, Ps. 80:2 – BDB 734, KB 802, *Polel* IMPERATIVE
4. come to save, Ps. 80:2 – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. restore us, Ps. 80:3 – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
6. cause to shine, Ps. 80:3 – BDB 21, KB 24, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (this may reflect the Aaronic blessing of Num. 6:25, also note Ps. 31:16)
7. we will be saved, Ps. 80:3 – BDB 446, 448, *Niphal* COHORTATIVE

80:1 “Shepherd of Israel” This phrase denotes God’s presence and tender care (cf. Gen. 49:24; Ps. 23:1-3) and also links to David, who was called by God from tending the sheep. This makes the Messianic allusion in Ps. 80:15-17 more probable (see Contextual Insights, C).

Notice how God is characterized.

1. Who led Joseph like a flock (Joseph is also mentioned in Ps. 77:15; 78:67)

2. Who is enthroned above the *cherubim*. This is an allusion to Exod. 25:22. YHWH symbolically dwelt above the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant between the two *cherubim* (cf. 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; Ps. 99:1). This was where heaven and earth met in the place of mercy and revelation! For “*cherubim*” see Special Topic: *Cherubim*.

▣ **“shine forth”** This emphasis on God’s involvement in the earthly, daily affairs of Israel is described as a light coming from above the ark. Notice the refrain in this Psalm (cf. Ps. 80:3,7,19) has another IMPERATIVE VERB (BDB 21, KB 24) denoting light. Light in the ANE was a symbol of revelation, health, goodness. In the OT it often relates to the brightness of a theophany (physical appearance of God). Note Ps. 50:2; 94:1, as well as the *Shekinah* cloud of glory during the exodus and wilderness wandering period (i.e., Exod. 13:21-22; 33:9).

God is light – Ps. 27:1; Isa. 60:20; Mic. 7:8; James 1:17; 1 John 1:5

Jesus is light – Isa. 9:2; John 1:4; 8:12; 12:35,46

believers are light – Matt. 5:14-16; John 8:12b

80:2 There is some question why only these tribes are mentioned. From Num. 2:18-24 we know they camped together on the west side of the tabernacle as they traveled through the wilderness.

Ephraim and Manasseh were the children of Joseph. Joseph and Benjamin were the sons of Jacob’s favorite wife, Rachel.

Joseph’s children were fully adopted by Jacob (i.e., thirteen tribes) and became the largest tribe when the united monarchy (i.e., Saul, David, Solomon) split in 922 B.C. They became the leaders of the northern coalition known as Israel, Samaria, or Ephraim. The first leader/king was an Ephraimitic labor leader, Jeroboam I.

Benjamin became part of the southern coalition of Judah along with most of the Levites. Simeon had earlier been incorporated into Judah, therefore, it may be a way of referring to all the covenant people.

80:3 This refrain (cf. Ps. 80:7,19) shows that this Psalm was written during a time of national difficulty. If Psalms 77-80 by Asaph come from the same historical period, then this is possibly related to the invasion of Judah by Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. He invaded several times (i.e., 605, 597, 586, 582 B.C.), but it is possible to see this Psalm as relating to the fall of Israel in 722 B.C., when Samaria fell after a three year siege by Assyria. The Jewish Study Bible (p. 1372) suggests that it was originally written for the fall of Samaria but was reworked to refer to the fall of Jerusalem because of the proximity and phrasing connections to Psalm 79, which is obviously 586 B.C.

Because Ps. 80:14 uses the same IMPERATIVE (BDB 996, KB 1427), some scholars see it as an additional refrain, thereby having each strophe close the same. However, Ps. 80:14 is not the same, even the same VERB is a *Qal* not *Hiphil*.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 80:4-7

⁴O LORD God of hosts,

How long will You be angry with the prayer of Your people?

⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears,

And You have made them to drink tears in large measure.

⁶You make us an object of contention to our neighbors,

And our enemies laugh among themselves.

⁷O God of hosts, restore us

And cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved.

80:4-7 This strophe is a plea for God to intervene on behalf of His people.

1. how long will You be angry – the question of God’s action or inaction is recurrent (cf. Ps. 74:10; 90:13; 94:3; Pro. 1:22)
2. You have fed them with the bread of tears (powerful imagery, cf. Ps. 42:3; 102:9)
3. You have made them to drink tears in large measure (lit. “third part,” BDB 1026 I, only here and Isa. 40:12)
4. You make us an object of contention to our neighbors (cf. Ps. 44:13; 79:4; Ezek. 5:14; 22:4; Dan. 9:16)
5. You have made it so our enemies laugh among themselves (at us). The TEV and NJB follow the LXX, “our enemies mock us.”

These consequences of Israel/Judah’s covenant disobedience and idolatry are exactly the opposite of what God wanted them to do in relation to their Gentile neighbors of the ANE. They were meant to be a light (cf. Ezek. 36:22-23) but became a joke (cf. Ps. 79:10; 115:2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 80:8-13

- ⁸**You removed a vine from Egypt;
You drove out the nations and planted it.**
- ⁹**You cleared *the ground* before it,
And it took deep root and filled the land.**
- ¹⁰**The mountains were covered with its shadow,
And the cedars of God with its boughs.**
- ¹¹**It was sending out its branches to the sea
And its shoots to the River.**
- ¹²**Why have You broken down its hedges,
So that all who pass *that way* pick its *fruit*?**
- ¹³**A boar from the forest eats it away
And whatever moves in the field feeds on it.**

80:8-13 This strophe uses the vineyard as a metaphor for the covenant people.

1. YHWH brought them out of Egypt (as He promised in Gen. 15:12-21)
2. YHWH defeated the Canaanite tribes (i.e., Joshua’s conquest)
3. YHWH planted them in the good soil of the Promised Land

Even with all these divine blessings they were unfaithful (cf. Nehemiah 9; Psalm 78). So the curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30 came into effect.

1. His protection (i.e., the wall of the vineyard) was removed
2. He allowed invaders to take Canaan (Ps. 80:12-13). As the Israelites drove out the sinful Canaanites (i.e., Gen. 15:12-21) so now the sinful covenant people are removed.

80:8 “vine” This could refer to all of the covenant people (cf. Isaiah 5; Hosea 10:1) or be a specific reference to the northern kingdom (cf. Gen. 49:22).

80:11 “sea. . .the River” This refers to the Mediterranean to the west and the head waters of the Euphrates River to the northeast (cf. Exod. 23:31).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 80:14-19

¹⁴**O God of hosts, turn again now, we beseech You;
Look down from heaven and see, and take care of this vine,**
¹⁵**Even the shoot which Your right hand has planted,
And on the son whom You have strengthened for Yourself.**
¹⁶**It is burned with fire, it is cut down;
They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance.**
¹⁷**Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand,
Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself.**
¹⁸**Then we shall not turn back from You;
Revive us, and we will call upon Your name.**
¹⁹**O LORD God of hosts, restore us;
Cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved.**

80:14-19 This strophe is a concluding prayer (3 *Qal* IMPERATIVES OF REQUEST in Ps. 80:14) for YHWH to have mercy on the descendants of Abraham.

The real question of interpretation is how they view this divine action to occur.

1. restore a strong nation (i.e., the shoot [BDB 488, only here in the OT] or vine of Ps. 80:8,14)
2. send a special Davidic seed (Ps. 80:15,17)
 - a. the son whom You have strengthened or secured (BDB 54)
 - b. Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, the son of man whom You have made strong (BDB 54, parallel to Ps. 80:15) for Yourself (cf. Ps. 110:1)

It is obvious this imagery could refer to

1. national Israel/Judah
2. a Davidic king/Messiah (cf. 2 Samuel 7 and Aramaic Targums)

80:16 Notice that Israel/Judah's difficulties are a direct result of God's actions, not the power of the invader. God used pagan nations to judge His people (cf. Habakkuk). This was shocking to Jewish people. He had fought on their side (cf. Ps. 76:6) but now He was on the side of the invaders (i.e., a reversal of "holy war" imagery).

80:17 "Your hand" See Special Topic: Hand.

▣ **"the son of man"** This phrase is recurrent in Ezekiel. See my commentary notes below from Ezekiel 2:1.

Ezek. 2:1 "Son of man" This is literally "*ben-Adam*" (BDB 119 CONSTRUCT, BDB 9). This is used often in Ezekiel as a way of referring to Ezekiel as a human being (93 times, cf. Ps. 8:4). In Ezekiel it is the way God addresses Ezekiel. This same phrase is found in Job and Psalms. In Dan. 7:13 this term takes on divine characteristics as one likened to "a son of man" coming before the Ancient of Days (i.e., deity) riding on the clouds of heaven. Daniel 7:13 is the background for Jesus' use of this term for himself, which combines humanity and deity (i.e., 1 John 4:1-3). The phrase had no nationalistic or militaristic rabbinical overtones.

80:18 This verse lists several promises spoken by the psalmist but on behalf of the covenant people.

1. then (i.e., after God turns again to them, cf. Ps. 80:14) we shall not turn back (i.e., backslide, BDB 690, KB 744, *Qal* IMPERFECT) from You
2. give us life/revive us (BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* IMPERFECT)
3. if God acts on their behalf they will call upon (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERFECT) His name in the temple

Notice this use of IMPERFECTS, which denotes an ongoing action.

80:19 See note at Ps. 80:3.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Does this Psalm refer to an invasion? If so, which historical period fits best?
2. Is this Psalm written about Israel or Judah?
3. List and explain the different terms and allusions to “light.”
4. Why does the refrain of Ps. 80:3,7,19 add to God’s name each time?
5. Why are nations often referred to in plant metaphors?
6. Are there “Messianic” hints in this Psalm or do they all refer to the nation as a whole?

PSALM 81

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Goodness and Israel's Waywardness <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; on the Gittith. <i>A Psalm</i> of Asaph	An Appeal For Israel's Repentance	Liturgy For A Festival	A Song For A Festival	For the Feast of Shelters
81:1-5	81:1-2	81:1-5b	81:1-5b	81:1
				81:2-3
	81:3-5			81:4-5b
		81:5c-10	81:5c-10	81:5c-7a
81:6-10	81:6-7			81:7b-8
	81:8-10			81:9-10
81:11-16	81:11-12	81:11-16	81:11-16	81:11-12
	81:13-16			81:13-14
				81:15-16

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There is much debate over whether this refers to the Feast of Booths or Passover.
- B. The Targum adds *Tishri* to Ps. 81:3, which is the month of the Feast of Booths.
- C. This Psalm obviously refers to the exodus and wilderness experience, so both the Passover and Feast of Booths fit. I think it is the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles, which commemorates the wilderness wanderings. JPSOA thinks it refers to the “New Year” liturgy. The difficulty is that Ps. 81:4 seems to refer to two different dates (i.e., first of the month and middle of the month).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 81:1-5

¹Sing for joy to God our strength;
Shout joyfully to the God of Jacob.
²Raise a song, strike the timbrel,
The sweet sounding lyre with the harp.
³Blow the trumpet at the new moon,
At the full moon, on our feast day.
⁴For it is a statute for Israel,
An ordinance of the God of Jacob.
⁵He established it for a testimony in Joseph
When he went throughout the land of Egypt.
I heard a language that I did not know:

81:1-5 This strophe is an admonition of the psalmist to the covenant people to rejoice at YHWH’s powerful deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage.

1. sing for joy – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 32:11
2. shout joyfully – BDB 929, KB 1206, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. raise a song – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. strike the timbrel – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. blow the trumpet – BDB 1075, KB 1785, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Notice the word play between #1 and 2; #3 and 4.

81:1 “to God our strength” “Strength” (BDB 738) is often linked with “refuge” (see Special Topic: Refuge) to describe God (cf. Ps. 14:6; 46:1; 62:6-7). Faithful followers’ hope, peace, and joy are in Him, not in

1. personal merit
2. circumstances
3. physical resources

81:3 “the timbrel” This musical instrument (BDB 1074) was a small handheld, circular frame with stretched animal skin. It was used in association with women dancing in the exodus victory in Exod. 15:20 (also note Jdgs. 11:34; 1 Sam. 18:6).

81:3 This verse is an admonition to worship God at the appropriate time and place.

1. the new moon – Israel’s way to mark a new month (BDB 294, i.e., totally dark, cf. Num. 10:10; 28:11-15)
2. full moon (BDB 409, i.e., totally bright, its use found only here and Pro. 7:20; it denoted the middle of the month)
3. feast day (lists of several annual feast days, cf. Exodus 23 and Leviticus 23)

Surprisingly Sabbaths are not mentioned (cf. 1 Chr. 23:31; 2 Chr. 2:4; Hos. 2:11).

SPECIAL TOPIC: Ancient near Eastern Calendars

▣ **“blow the trumpet”** This instrument (BDB 1051) is mentioned in Exod. 19:16,19, when Israel prepared herself for YHWH’s giving of His laws. Again this is an allusion to the exodus experience. See Special Topic: Horns Used By Israel.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Feasts of Israel

81:4-5 “statute. . .ordinance. . .testimony” These terms are ways to designate YHWH’s revelations to Israel.

1. statutes – BDB 349
2. ordinance – BDB 1048
3. testimony – BDB 730

In context these seem to refer to the revelations about feast days (cf. Exodus 23; Leviticus 23). See Special Topic: Terms for God’s Revelation.

These laws seem to be the crux of what Ps. 81:5c means.

1. Joseph’s testimony of his faith in YHWH as he traveled through Egypt
2. Moses’ testimony as he shared YHWH’s predictions of plagues
3. the language of the Egyptians, which the Hebrews did not originally understand
4. YHWH’s laws that Israel rejected (cf. Ps. 81:8,11,13)
5. the fearful voice of God on Mt. Sinai (i.e., relates Ps. 81:5c to Ps. 81:6) spoken in Hebrew, which by this time most Israelites did not understand because they spoke Egyptian. If so, Ps. 81:5c is more FIRST PERSON MASCULINE SINGULAR VERBS, which would denote YHWH.

81:5 “a language that I did not know” This is a literary idiom for Israel’s time in Egypt (cf. Ps. 114:1). It is also used of the invasion and occupation of Canaan by

1. Assyria – Deut. 28:49
2. Babylon – Jer. 5:15

Many modern translations see Ps. 81:5c as going with 81:6, not 81:5b. If so, it applies to YHWH speaking on Mt. Sinai (i.e., in Hebrew or in thunder). Israel was afraid of the powerful physical manifestation of YHWH on Mt. Sinai (cf. Exodus 19-20).

The remaining verses record YHWH speaking (i.e., Ps. 81:6-16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 81:6-10

6“I relieved his shoulder of the burden,

His hands were freed from the basket.

7You called in trouble and I rescued you;

I answered you in the hiding place of thunder;

I proved you at the waters of Meribah.

Selah.

**⁸Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you;
O Israel, if you would listen to Me!
⁹Let there be no strange god among you;
Nor shall you worship any foreign god.
¹⁰I, the LORD, am your God,
Who brought you up from the land of Egypt;
Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.**

81:6-10 This strophe is a summary of all the gracious acts of YHWH in the exodus and wilderness wandering period. Notice all the FIRST PERSON MASCULINE SINGULAR VERBS! YHWH is directly addressing His people.

1. I relieved (lit. “removed”), Ps. 81:6 – BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* PERFECT
2. I rescued (lit. “delivered”), Ps. 81:7 – BDB 322, KB 321, *Piel* IMPERFECT with *waw*
3. I answered, Ps. 81:7 – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERFECT
4. I proved, Ps. 81:7 – BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* IMPERFECT
5. I will admonish, Ps. 81:8 – BDB 729, KB 795, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
6. I, the LORD, am your God, Ps. 81:10 – covenant language
7. I will fill it, Ps. 81:10 – BDB 569, KB 583, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

Also notice

8. I gave them over to, Ps. 81:12 – BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Piel* IMPERFECT with *waw* (cf. Rom. 1:24,26,28)
9. I would quickly subdue, Ps. 81:14
10. I would feed you, Ps. 81:16 – BDB 37, KB 46, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT with *waw*
11. I would satisfy you, Ps. 81:16 – BDB 959, KB 1302, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT

YHWH speaks from Ps. 81:6 through 16 by means of a priest or prophet.

81:6 This verse refers to the forced labor of the Hebrew slaves (i.e., Exod. 1:8-14).

81:7 “You called in trouble and I rescued you” This is an allusion to YHWH’s dialog with Moses in Exod. 3:7-10.

▣ **“I answered you in the hiding place of thunder”** This seems to allude to Israel’s Mt. Sinai experience (cf. Exod. 19:19; 20:18).

▣ **“I proved you at the waters of Meribah”** This refers to the Israelites’ experience recorded in Exod. 17:6-7 and Num. 20:13. The AB (pp. 265-266) sees this line as “though I was provoked by you” (cf. Exod. 17:7; Num. 14:22; 20:24; 27:14; Deut. 33:8; Ps. 93:8-9). Each of these texts states that Israel tested God, not God tested Israel.

Deuteronomy 33:8 seems to support the MT of Ps. 81:7c as God testing the Israelites.

▣ **“Selah”** See notes at Psalm 3:2.

81:8 “Hear” This is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE! It begins a series of references to Israel’s lack of responding appropriately to YHWH’s revelation (cf. Neh. 9:34).

1. if you would listen – Ps. 81:8
2. My people did not listen – Ps. 81:11

3. Israel did not obey Me – Ps. 81:11
4. Oh that My people would listen to Me – Ps. 81:13

Derek Kidner, in the Tyndale Commentary series (p. 326), thinks “Hear, O My people” is an allusion to the *Shema* prayer of Deut. 6:4-6. It may well be!

81:9 Israel was commanded not to make or go after foreign gods (cf. Exod. 20:3,23). The Israelites were attracted to the fertility gods of Canaan. Israel’s uniqueness in the ANE was her monotheism, which allowed for no rivals!

The Jewish Study Bible (p. 1374) asserts that Ps. 81:9-10 are an allusion to Exod. 20:1-2; Deut. 5:6, but in reverse order.

81:10 This refers to YHWH’s provision of food and water during the wilderness wandering period.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 81:11-16

- ¹¹“But My people did not listen to My voice,
And Israel did not obey Me.
¹²So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart,
To walk in their own devices.
¹³Oh that My people would listen to Me,
That Israel would walk in My ways!
¹⁴I would quickly subdue their enemies
And turn My hand against their adversaries.
¹⁵Those who hate the LORD would pretend obedience to Him,
And their time *of punishment* would be forever.
¹⁶But I would feed you with the finest of the wheat,
And with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”

81:11-16 This strophe contrasts what Israel did with what YHWH wanted to do for them.

1. Israel’s history of rebellion (cf. Ps. 78:17,40)
 - a. did not listen
 - b. did not obey
 - c. had stubborn hearts
 - d. walked in their own devices
2. YHWH’s reaction
 - a. judgment
 - (1) gave them over to (cf. Ps. 78:29; Isa. 6:9-10; Rom. 1:24,26,28) the stubbornness of their hearts, Ps. 81:12
 - (2) gave them over to walk in their own devices, Ps. 81:12
 - (3) those who pretend obedience would suffer eternal loss, Ps. 81:15
 - b. His desire
 - (1) that they would listen to Him, Ps. 81:13
 - (2) that they would walk in His ways, Ps. 81:13
 - c. His blessings
 - (1) subdue their enemies, Ps. 81:14
 - (2) turn His hand against their adversaries, Ps. 81:14
 - (3) feed them

- (a) the finest of the wheat (cf. Deut. 32:14)
- (b) honey from the rock (i.e., the best food of the land, cf. Deut. 32:13)
- (4) satisfy them

PSALM 82

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Unjust Judgment Rebuked <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of Asaph	A Plea For Justice	Liturgy of the LORD'S Judgment on pagan gods	God the Supreme Ruler	Against the Judge of the Nations
82:1-4	82:1-4	82:1-4	82:1-4	82:1 82:2-3 82:4
82:5-8	82:5 82:6-7 82:8	82:5 82:6-7 82:8	82:5-7 82:8	82:5-7 82:8

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The real question about this Psalm is "to whom is it addressed"?
 1. Israeli judges (*Elohim* used of Israeli judges, Exod. 21:6; 22:8-9; also note Targums and possibly Ps. 58:1)
 2. pagan judges (NRSV and NJB readings possibly alluded to in Ps. 81:8) or pagan kings (NASB Study Bible, p. 825)
 3. pagan gods (NET Bible, p. 953; AB, p. 268, using Ezek. 28:1-10 as a parallel; and NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 216)
 4. national angels (cf. Deut. 4:19; 32:8, angels of the nations, cf. Dan. 10:13)
 5. angels of the heavenly council (i.e., "sons of *Elohim*, cf. Ps. 8:5; 95:3; 96:4; 97:7; 138:1; Job 1:6; 38:7)

- B. The judgments of *Elohim* (i.e., the One) are contrasted with the judgments of *elohim* (i.e., judges or the angels). Psalm 82:7 demands angels!
- C. Jesus uses this Psalm in John 10:31-38, in which He sees it as referring to human judges. I think Jesus is quoting Psalm 82 but alluding to Exod. 21:6; 22:8-9. His point is that “*elohim*” can be used in several senses!

The NASB Study Bible asserts that Jesus is using a known rabbinical interpretation to confound the charges against Him (p. 825).

- D. It seems that the imagery of a Canaanite pantheon, which included an angelic assembly, is being used to assert YHWH's
1. moral character
 2. universal reign

The OT often uses imagery from the ANE to communicate truth without affirming the reality of pagan mythology (i.e., [1] defeat of chaos, watery monsters, [2] tree of life; [3] actions and titles of *Ba'al*, etc.). Imagery communicates reality in ways so that fallen mankind can grasp the central truths! YHWH is much greater than humans can imagine and separation from Him is much worse!

It is difficult to know for sure what is ANE imagery and what is biblical, doctrinal truth. Westerners tend to be literalists whereas the Bible has a literary quality. Literal does not always adequately or accurately convey the original author's intent.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 82:1-4

- ¹God takes His stand in His own congregation;
He judges in the midst of the rulers.
- ²How long will you judge unjustly
And show partiality to the wicked? Selah.
- ³Vindicate the weak and fatherless;
Do justice to the afflicted and destitute.
- ⁴Rescue the weak and needy;
Deliver *them* out of the hand of the wicked.

82:1 “God” This is the title *Elohim* (BDB 43, see Special Topic: Names for Deity). It is used twice in this verse and again in Ps. 82:6 and 8.

The general term *El* (BDB 42) is the common name for deity in the ANE.

▣ **“takes His stand”** Here, this term (BDB 662, KB 714, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) is used of *Elohim* (the One, using SINGULAR PARTICIPLE) taking the authoritative position (same term is used in the sense of “presiding over” in 1 Sam. 19:20) in “the congregation of *El*.” This refers to the heavenly council (cf. 1 Kgs. 22:19; 2 Chr. 18:18; Job 1:6; 2:1), possibly made up of

1. worshiping angels
2. national angels, Deut. 32:8; Ps. 89:5-8; Isa. 6:1; 24:19
3. servant angels, Job 38:7; Dan. 7:9-10

82:2-4 these verses represent YHWH's revealed will in the Pentateuch (i.e., Genesis – Deuteronomy). YHWH is the speaker in Ps. 82:2-4.

1. show no partiality to the wicked (cf. Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; 16:19; this is because YHWH judges impartially, Deut. 10:17)
2. vindicate the weak – BDB 1047, KB 1622, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. vindicate the fatherless (implied IMPERATIVE from #2, cf. Deut. 24:17)
4. do justice to the afflicted – BDB 842, KB 1003, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
5. do justice to the destitute – implied IMPERATIVE from #4
6. rescue the weak – BDB 812, KB 930, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
7. rescue the needy – implied IMPERATIVE from #6
8. deliver them out of the hand of the wicked (ties back to Ps. 82:2b) – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

Human judges, even Israel's judges, acted unfairly in their judgments. Apparently they are influenced by the angelic rebellion and fall. Psalm 82:5-7 refers to inappropriate angelic actions and God's judgment of them (cf. Ps. 82:7a).

82:2 There is an obvious contrast set up between the *Elohim* (i.e., the one true God) and the PLURAL *elohim* (i.e., the angelic council). This implies that the national angels also ignored YHWH's covenant revelations to Israel, especially the powerless and needy of society. God loves human beings made in His image, all human beings!

▣ **“show partiality”** This VERB (BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is literally “to lift the face.” It was a way to see if you recognized a person and accepted them (cf. Gen. 32:20; Job 42:8-9). However, for a judge it became an act of showing favor or partiality and was condemned (cf. Deut. 1:17; 16:19; Lev. 19:15; Job 13:8; 32:21; 34:19; Pro. 17:15; 18:5; 24:23; 28:21).

▣ **“Selah”** See notes at Psalm 3:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 82:5-8

- ⁵**They do not know nor do they understand;
They walk about in darkness;
All the foundations of the earth are shaken.**
- ⁶**I said, “You are gods,
And all of you are sons of the Most High.**
- ⁷**Nevertheless you will die like men
And fall like *any* one of the princes.”**
- ⁸**Arise, O God, judge the earth!
For it is You who possesses all the nations.**

82:5-8 This strophe cannot refer to humans but must refer to angels.

1. “all the foundations of the earth are shaken”
2. You are gods (i.e., *elohim*)
3. sons of the Most High (see Special Topic: The Sons of God [Genesis 6])
4. you will die like men

5. fall like one of the princes (“princes” used of national angels in Dan. 10:5,20; but humans in Isa. 3:13-14)
6. judge the earth. . .possess all the nations

82:5 Those addressed by the Psalm are characterized as

1. they do not know
2. they do not understand
3. they walk in darkness

These, like Ps. 82:2-4, can refer to Israelis. This is why some commentators take “*elohim*” in Ps. 82:1b and 6a to refer to human judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; 22:8-9). I think the evidence of the Psalm as a whole points to national angels.

If Ps. 82:2-4 shows YHWH speaking, who is speaking in Ps. 82:5-7? It must be the psalmist himself as the first words of Ps. 82:6, 7, and 8 as a whole, seem to demand. However, it must be admitted that they could also reflect the words of YHWH Himself (UBS *Handbook*, p. 730).

▣ **“They walk about in darkness”** The VERB “walk about” (BDB 229, KB 246, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT) denotes lifestyle action.

The “darkness” is a metaphor for evil or rejection of God’s revelation. The concept is expressed in several idioms.

1. ways of darkness – Pro. 2:13; 4:19; Isa. 9:2; 50:10; John 3:19-20
2. works of darkness – Job 24:13-17; Jer. 23:12
3. grope in darkness – Deut. 28:29; Job 5:14; 12:25; Isa. 59:9-10
4. call light darkness – Job 17:12; Isa. 5:20

Spiritual, intentional blindness is a terrible thing. Both angels and humans purposefully choose not to see (cf. Isa. 24:21)! They put out their own spiritual eyes!

▣ **“the foundations of the earth are shaken”** This could be taken in two senses.

1. the moral foundations, cf. Ps. 11:3; Isa. 24:7-13, esp. Ps. 82:18
2. the physical foundations, cf. Ps. 93:1; 96:10; 104:5

82:6 “sons of the Most High” See the Special Topic: The Sons of God, where I discuss the phrase in Genesis 6. I think it refers to angels there also.

For “Most High” see Special Topic: Names For Deity.

82:7 “fall” AB asserts this refers to falling into *Sheol* and uses Isa. 14:12-15 and Ezek. 28:1-10 as examples (p. 270). Again, notice the confusion between an angel (i.e., Satan) and humans (i.e., king of Babylon and king of Tyre). There is mystery here! The OT is using imagery, analogy, and idioms in ways moderns do not fully understand. In the ANE there was no division between the spiritual realm and the physical realm.

82:8 These last two *Qal* IMPERATIVES (“arise” and “judge”) have a universal focus. God is not only creator but also judge. He reigns over all creation (cf. Ps. 2:8; Rev. 11:15).

As Jesus functioned as YHWH’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2), He is also YHWH’s agent in judgment (cf. John 5:22-23,27; 9:39; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5).

The last VERB is a *Qal* IMPERFECT, not a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. It asserts that YHWH does possess, not should possess. It is a statement of truth!

If the angelic interpretation is true (and there is some doubt because of Jesus’ usage in John 10), then the psalmist is praying that YHWH would defeat the pagan gods or national angels and set up His righteous

system on all the earth as He originally intended in Eden (before the Fall, the flood and/or the tower of Babel). One day it will be so (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Explain the concept of a heavenly council. Is it made up of righteous or wicked angels?
2. Explain the two different usages of “*elohim*.”
3. List the elements in this Psalm that point toward “humans” and those that point toward “angels.”
4. What do we mean when we say God created a moral universe?
5. Do the psalmist and Jesus use Ps. 82:6 in the same way?
6. Who are “the princes” of Ps. 82:7?
7. Explain how the universal thrust of Ps. 82:8 fits the rest of the Psalm.
8. Does Scripture use ANE imagery and mythology?

PSALM 83

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God Implored to Confound His Enemies <u>MT Intro</u> A Song, <i>A Psalm</i> of Asaph	Prayer To Frustrate Conspiracy Against Israel	Prayer for Deliverance From National Enemies	Prayer for the Defeat of Israel's Enemies	Against the Enemies of Israel
83:1-8	83:1-4	83:1-8	83:1-4	83:1-2 83:3-4
	83:5-8		83:5-8	83:5-8
83:9-12	83:9-12	83:9-12	83:9-12	83:9-12
83:13-18	83:13-18	83:13-18	83:13-18	83:13-18

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. YHWH is intimately linked to His covenant people. The planning and scheming of the surrounding ANE nations to attack Israel, is a plan to attack Him (cf. Ps. 83:5 and note Ps. 83:12).
- B. Several nations and people groups are mentioned.
 1. Edom
 2. Ishmaelites
 3. Moab
 4. Hagrites
 5. Gebal
 6. Ammon
 7. Amalek
 8. Philistia
 9. Tyre (i.e., Phoenicia)

10. Assyria
 11. Midian (Numbers 11-14 refer to events in Israel's past where YHWH helped them)
 12. Sisera and Jabin
 13. Oreb and Zech
 14. Zebah and Zalmunna
- C. This Psalm of prayer (5 IMPERATIVES) for the destruction of Israel's enemies is characterized by a large number of IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense.
1. Ps. 83:1 – two stated but three implied
 2. Ps. 83:15-18 – six (possibly eight with Ps. 83:15)
- D. This Psalm uses several names for Deity.
1. God, Ps. 83:1a, 12b – *Elohim* (BDB 43)
 2. God, Ps. 83:16 – *El* (BDB 42)
 3. God, Ps. 83:13a – *Eloah* (BDB 43)
 4. LORD, Ps. 83:16b, 18a – YHWH (BDB 217)
 5. Most High, Ps. 83:18b – *Elyon* (BDB 751)
- See Special Topic: Names For Deity
- E. This Psalm has a strong
1. evangelistic thrust (i.e., Ps. 83:16b, 18)
 2. universal focus (Ps. 83:18b)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 83:1-8

- ¹O God, do not remain quiet;
Do not be silent and, O God, do not be still.
- ²For behold, Your enemies make an uproar,
And those who hate You have exalted themselves.
- ³They make shrewd plans against Your people,
And conspire together against Your treasured ones.
- ⁴They have said, "Come, and let us wipe them out as a nation,
That the name of Israel be remembered no more."
- ⁵For they have conspired together with one mind;
Against You they make a covenant:
- ⁶The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites,
Moab and the Hagrites;
- ⁷Gebal and Ammon and Amalek,
Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;
- ⁸Assyria also has joined with them;
They have become a help to the children of Lot. Selah.

83:1-8 This strophe describes the inappropriate activities of the surrounding nations. The psalmist requests that God act on Israel's behalf.

1. do not remain quiet – BDB 198, no VERB but parallel to #2, #3
2. do not be silent – BDB 361, KB 357, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 28:1; 35:22; 50:3; 109:1
3. do not be still (i.e., inactive) – BDB 1052, KB 1641, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

The fact that the surrounding nations planned and acted out their aggression (Ps. 83:2-8) caused the covenant people to wonder at YHWH's apparent inactivity.

Notice the activity of the surrounding nations.

1. make un uproar – BDB 242, KB 250, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 46:6 and very similar to Ps. 2:1-2
2. exalted themselves (lit. raised their heads) – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Jdgs. 8:28; Zech. 1:21
3. made shrewd plans – BDB 791, KB 886, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, only here in *Hiphil* in the OT
4. conspire together – BDB 419, KB 421, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT, used in the sense of “determine” in 2 Chr. 30:23
 - a. come – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. wipe them out – BDB 470, KB 469, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense, cf. Ps. 74:8
 - c. that the name of Israel be remembered no more – BDB 269, KB 269, *Niphal* IMPERFECT, which is an idiom for total destruction and death

The conclusion to this list is stated in Ps. 83:5. An attack on Israel is an attack on YHWH, cf. Ps. 83:2; Ps. 2:2; 74:18,23.

83:3 “Your people. . .Your treasured ones” The second expression (BDB 860, KB 1049, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) has two possible connotations in BDB.

1. treasured (JPSOA), cf. Exod. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18
2. hidden with God, cf. Ps. 27:5; 31:21

The NKJV has “sheltered ones” (#2), while NJB has “those you cherish” (#1).

83:4b “the name of Israel” This is a way of referring to the nation (cf. Ps. 83:4a).

For the meaning of the name “Israel” see Special Topic: Israel (the Name).

83:5 “covenant” See Special Topic: Covenant.

83:6 “tents of. . .” This is an idiomatic anachronism of when Israel lived in “tents,” but at this period most of them lived in cities and villages with more permanent housing.

The other possibility is that it is idiomatic for a nation (cf. Ps. 74:51; 120:5).

AB (p. 274) mentions a scroll fragment found at Masada that has “the gods of Edom. . .” This fits well with the imagery of “arm” in Ps. 83:8. It would also link up well with the national angels of Psalm 82. AB lists Yigael Yadin, *Israel Exploration Journal*, 15 (1965), 104, as the place to see the phrase.

▣ “Edom”

SPECIAL TOPIC: Edom and Israel

▣ **“Ishmaelites”** This refers to the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's first child by Hagar (cf. Gen. 25:12-16). They became the Arab tribes.

▣ **“Moab”** This is one of the two nations descended from Lot and his daughters (cf. Gen. 19:30-38, esp. Ps. 83:37).

▣ **“Hagrites”** This is a tribe from Ishmael mentioned in 1 Chr. 5:10,18-22. The name may come from “Hagar,” Ishmael’s Egyptian mother. They lived to the east of Canaan and some parts of the tribe, more to the southeast.

83:7 “Gebal” This name (BDB 148, KB 174) can have two possible references.

1. from the word for “mountain,” may refer to an area in the trans-Jordan area near Petra, thereby connected to Arab tribe
2. from the name of an old Phoenician coastal city and, therefore, would parallel Tyre (Ps. 83:7b), later known as Byblos

▣ **“Ammon”** See notes on Moab, Ps. 83:6.

▣ **“Amalek”** A descendant of Esau, who became chief in Edom (cf. Gen. 30:15-16). They were especially problematic to Israel during the wilderness wandering period (cf. Exod. 17:8-16; Num. 24:20; Deut. 25:12-19. Saul was commanded to destroy them (cf. 1 Samuel 15).

▣ **“Philistia”** The Philistines were apparently Greeks from the Aegean Islands. They were the only group of people in this part of the world who were uncircumcized. They were apparently a mercenary force who tried to attack Egypt in the twelfth century B.C. but were defeated. They then settled on the southern coast of Palestine. They had five major cities which are delineated in Jos.13:3: Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gad, and Ekron. They were a major military problem throughout the period of the judges and even throughout the reign of Saul and David. The name “Palestine” comes from the word “Philistine.”

▣ **“Tyre”** This is the famous seaport of the Phoenician Empire north of Israel. The older capital was “Sidon” (and possibly older than that, Gebal).

▣ **“Assyria”** This was a major empire of the Tigris/Euphrates. It became powerful in about the middle 900's B.C. to 609 B.C., when the capital of Nineveh fell (Nahum). See Special Topic: Survey of the Powers of Mesopotamia (Assyria, Babylon, Persia).

The mentioning of Assyria and not Babylon is a hint of the date this Psalm was written.

83:8 The Assyrians had become a help (lit. “arm”) for the trans-Jordan nations that descended from Lot and his two daughters (cf. Gen. 19:30-38).

1. Moab
2. Ammon

▣ **“Selah”** See notes at Psalm 3:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 83:9-12

- ⁹Deal with them as with Midian,
As with Sisera *and* Jabin at the torrent of Kishon,
¹⁰Who were destroyed at En-dor,
Who became as dung for the ground.
¹¹Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb

**And all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,
¹²Who said, “Let us possess for ourselves
The pastures of God.”**

83:9-12 This strophe reminds the current Israelites of YHWH’s presence and help in the past when invaders plotted to take Israel’s land.

1. as with Midian – Jdgs. 7:22
2. Sisera and Jabin – Jdgs. 4:22-23
3. Oreb and Zeeb – Jdgs. 7:25
4. Zebah and Zalmunna – Jdgs. 8:21

83:10 “as dung for the ground” This refers to the huge number of dead bodies after a battle. The prospect of being improperly buried or eaten by animals would terrify ANE people (cf. 2 Kgs. 9:37; Ps. 79:2-3; Jer. 8:2; 22:19; 36:30). This was a curse formula!

▣ **“En-dor”** This location is mentioned in Saul’s day but not in the book of Judges. The NEB changes it to En-harod, which is mentioned in Jdgs. 7:1 and fits with the historical allusions of Ps. 83:9-11 (i.e., Judges 4-8). The UBS Text Project (p. 341) gives En-dor an “A” rating and rejects the emendation. Though not mentioned by name, it is still in the general area (cf. Jos. 17:11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 83:13-18

¹³**O my God, make them like the whirling dust,
Like chaff before the wind.**
¹⁴**Like fire that burns the forest
And like a flame that sets the mountains on fire,**
¹⁵**So pursue them with Your tempest
And terrify them with Your storm.**
¹⁶**Fill their faces with dishonor,
That they may seek Your name, O LORD.**
¹⁷**Let them be ashamed and dismayed forever,
And let them be humiliated and perish,**
¹⁸**That they may know that You alone, whose name is the LORD,
Are the Most High over all the earth.**

83:13-18 This strophe is a prayer for YHWH to act in judgment on Israel’s behalf.

1. make them – BDB 1011, KB 1483, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - a. like whirling dust, cf. Isa. 17:13; 29:5; 41:15-16
 - b. like chaff before the wind, cf. Isa. 17:13
 - c. like fire that burns the forest
 - d. like a flame that sets the mountains on fire
2. pursue them – BDB 922, KB 1191, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. terrify them – BDB 96, KB 111, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. fill their faces with dishonor – BDB 569, KB 583, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
5. let them be ashamed – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
6. let them be dismayed – BDB 96, KB 111, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

7. let them be humiliated – BDB 344, KB 340, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
8. let them perish – BDB 1, KB 2, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

There are two more which show the intended purpose of judgment, which is to help the nations come to worship YHWH (see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan).

1. that they may seek Your name, O YHWH – BDB134, KB 152, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (Ps. 83:16)
2. that they may know that You alone are the Most High over all the earth – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (Ps. 83:17)

83:17 Notice the parallelism between “forever” and “persists.” These reflect on Ps. 83:4, where the nations wanted Israel to cease to exist!

83:18 “over all the earth” This universal element is common in the Psalms of Asaph! It is the obvious necessary conclusion to monotheism (see Special Topic: Monotheism).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Does this Psalm reflect a historical invasion by a coalition of nations or historical imagery?
2. How does Ps. 83:1 reflect the fear and confusion of Israel?
3. How are Ps. 83:4-5 related to YHWH's larger redemptive plan? Is there a Satanic attempt to thwart God's redemptive activity?

PSALM 84

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Longing For the Temple Worship <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director; on the Gittith. A Psalm of the sons of Korah	The Blessedness of Dwelling in the House of God	Sons Praising Zion as the Longed-for Goal of the Pilgrim	Longing for God's House	Pilgrimage Sons
84:1-4	84:1-2 84:3-4	84:1-2 84:3-4	84:1-4	84:1-2 84:3 84:4-5
84:5-7	84:5-7	84:5-7	84:5-7	84:6-7
84:8-12	84:8-9 84:10-11 84:12	84:8-9 84:10-12	84:8-9 84:10-12	84:8-9 84:10 84:11 84:12

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Many have assumed that this Psalm was written by a Levite, who, for some reason, is estranged from the temple.
 1. because of sickness
 2. because of banishment
 3. because the King has fled (cf. Ps. 84:9) and he has gone with him

- B. In this Psalm, fellowship with Israel's God is connected to the temple.
1. Your dwelling places, Ps. 84:1a – BDB 1015, cf. Ps. 43:3; 132:5
 2. the courts of YHWH, Ps. 84:2a – BDB 346, cf. Ps. 65:4; 84:10; 96:8 100:4; 116:19; 135:2
 3. Your altars, Ps. 84:3c – BDB 258
 4. Your house, Ps. 84:4a
 5. the highways *to Zion*, Ps. 84:5b, cf. Ps. 86:11; 122:1
 6. appears before God in Zion, Ps. 84:7b, cf. Ps. 42:2; Exod. 34:23; Deut. 16:16
 7. Your courts, Ps. 84:10a, cf. #2
 8. stand at the threshold of the house of my God (*Eloah*), Ps. 84:10b – BDB 706, KB 765, *Hithpoel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (used of “gatekeeper” in 1 Chr. 23:5)
- C. Notice the different names/titles for Deity.
1. LORD of hosts (YHWH *Sabaoth*), Ps. 84:1,3,12a
 2. LORD (YHWH), Ps. 84:2a,8a,11b
 3. the loving God (*El*), Ps. 84:2b, cf. Deut. 5:26; Ps. 42:2
 4. My King, Ps. 84:3d
 5. My God (*Elohim*), Ps. 84:3d
 6. God (*El - Elohim*, lit. “God of gods” or with a change of vowels, “before God”), Ps. 84:7b
 7. God (*Elohim*) of hosts, Ps. 84:8a
 8. God (*Eloah*) of Jacob, Ps. 84:8b, cf. Ps. 46:7
 9. God (*Elohim*), Ps. 84:9a
 10. My God (*Eloah*), Ps. 84:10b
 11. LORD God (YHWH *Elohim*), Ps. 84:11a
- Many of the Psalms of Asaph have multiple names/titles of God. See Special Topic: Names For Deity. Each of these, and their combinations, had connotations for Israelites.
- D. This Psalm is similar in many ways to Psalm 42. The sons of Korah, apparently a family of Levitical singers, also wrote it. The father was Kohath, the choirmaster under David. They wrote Psalms 42-49; 84-85; 87-88.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 84:1-4

¹How lovely are Your dwelling places,
O LORD of hosts!

²My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD;
My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

³The bird also has found a house,
And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,
Even Your altars, O LORD of hosts,
My King and my God.

⁴How blessed are those who dwell in Your house!
They are ever praising You.

Selah.

84:1 “lovely” This ADJECTIVE is literally “beloved” (BDB 391). Jerusalem, the city of the Great God, is beautiful, but even more, it is “beloved,” was is Israel (cf. Ps. 127:2).

▣ **“Your dwelling places”** This is a parallel poetic relationship with Ps. 84:2. Therefore, it must refer to the courts of the temple in Jerusalem (cf. Ps. 43:3; 46:4), where God Himself chose to dwell (cf. Deut. 12:5,11,14,18,21,26; 14:23-25; 15:20; 16:2,6,11,15; 17:8,10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11).

84:2 This verse has three VERBS that describe how the psalmist feels about YHWH. It is very similar to another Psalm of Korah—Psalm 42 (also note Psalm 63).

1. My soul longed – BDB 493, KB 490, *Niphal* PERFECT
2. my soul even yearned – BDB 477, KB 476, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 119:81
3. my heart and my flesh sing for joy – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 51:14

This emotive language is very powerful. It reminds faithful followers of the wonderful personal side of fellowship with God. The goal is to be with Him! For Israelites that was linked to the temple. For NT believers it is linked to Jesus, the new temple (cf. John 2:18-22)!

▣ **“the living God”** This is a word play on the meaning of YHWH (“I Am Who I Am,” cf. Exod. 3:14). The God of Israel is the ever-living, only-living God! (cf. Ps. 42:2).

See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

84:3 “bird” This can refer to two things, one literal and one symbolic. The symbolic would mean that the psalmist longs to be close to God in the temple—to dwell with God. The small helpless bird symbolizes a person. The literal would mean that the birds have free access even to the holiest places in the temple.

▣ **“My King”** YHWH was the true “king” of the covenant people (cf. 1 Sam. 8:7). Biblical faith is not a democracy but a theocracy! Jesus put it well in Luke 6:46, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” See Special Topic: The Kingdom of God.

84:4 “How blessed are those who dwell in Your house” This Psalm is structured around the three uses of the term “blessed” (BDB 80, Ps. 84:4,5,12). It basically means “happy” (cf. Ps. 9:1). It could refer, in this context, to priests or to guests (cf. Ps. 23:6; 27:4-6; 65:4).

▣ **“They are ever praising You”** Praise characterizes YHWH’s true followers (cf. Ps. 42:5,11).

“Ever” (BDB 728) is used often in this section of the Psalms (cf. Ps. 77P:7; 78:17,30,32; 83:4). There is an eternal aspect to fellowship with YHWH!

▣ **“Selah”** See notes at Ps. 3:2

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 84:5-7

⁵How blessed is the man whose strength is in You,

In whose heart are the highways to Zion!

⁶Passing through the valley of Baca they make it a spring;

The early rain also covers it with blessings.

⁷They go from strength to strength,

Every one of them appears before God in Zion.

▣ **“How blessed is the man whose. . .”** This is terminology of Wisdom Literature. “Blessed” (BDB 80) is used 26 times in Psalms and 8 times in Proverbs. See note at Ps. 1:1.

▣ **“In whose heart are the highways to Zion”** Many commentators (and BDB) interpret this as a reference to pilgrims approaching the temple. Male Jews over the age of 21, who lived close enough and were able, were commanded to attend three annual feasts at the temple (i.e., Leviticus 23 and Exodus 23).

▣ **“highways”** This term (BDB 700) has wonderful connotations of restoration, both physically (i.e., from exile) and spiritually (i.e., coming of YHWH’s special deliverer, Messiah).

The following is my note from Isaiah 19:23.

Isaiah 19:23 There will be a free-flowing movement between nations for the purpose of worshiping YHWH. The nations have come!

It is interesting how many times Isaiah uses the imagery of a highway.

1. a highway for the exiled Jews to return, Isa. 11:16; 57:14
2. a highway for Gentile worshipers to come, Isa. 19:23
3. a highway of holiness, Isa. 26:7; 35:8; 43:19; 49:11; 51:10
4. a Messianic highway, Isa. 40:3; 42:16

84:6 “Baca” The term (BDB 113) means “weeping.” Some take this literally and apply it to a valley close to Jerusalem (i.e., 2 Sam. 5:22-24). Others take it symbolically as the problems encountered on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem or a return from exile.

▣ **“spring”** This term (BDB 745), like “Baca,” is taken by some as a literal site of water and by others as a metaphor of God’s care on the journey.

▣ **“early rain”** The LXX and the Vulgate translate this (BDB 435) as “lawgiver” (cf. NASB margin note at Joel 2:23), which would be an allusion to YHWH’s Sinaitic covenant (cf. Exodus 19-20). In this context it refers to the temple in Jerusalem.

▣ **“blessings”** The MT has “blessings” (BDB 139), but the KJV has “pools” (BDB 140), parallel to the term “spring.” This involves only a vowel change.

84:7 “from strength to strength” The NASB interprets these terms as provisions for the journey. It is possible to translate these consonants as “height to height,” meaning ridge to ridge as one approaches Jerusalem. One of my favorite commentators, Derek Kidner, *Tyndale OT Commentaries*, vol. 116, p. 336, says he thinks it refers to the excitement that pilgrims have as they come to the final phase of the journey to the temple.

▣ **“Every one of them appears before God in Zion”** Again, the NASB and NKJV are interpreting this as a pilgrim’s journey. It is possible to translate these consonants as “The God of gods (lit. *El Elohim*, NRSV) will be seen in Zion” (LXX, Peshitta).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 84:8-12

⁸O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;

Give ear, O God of Jacob!

Selah.

⁹Behold our shield, O God,

And look upon the face of Your anointed.

¹⁰For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand *outside*.

**I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.**

¹¹For the LORD God is a sun and shield;

The LORD gives grace and glory;

No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

¹²O LORD of hosts,

How blessed is the man who trusts in You!

84:8-9 There are four IMPERATIVES used in two parallel lines.

1. hear – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal*
2. give ear – BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil*
3. behold – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal*
4. look – BDB 613, KB 661, *Hiphil*

These are prayer requests for YHWH to restore access to temple worship. Notice how the PLURALS of Ps. 84:4-7 return to the SINGULARS of Ps. 84:2-3!

Psalm 84:8-9 is a prayer for a person's restoration to temple worship and for this to come about by God strengthening and empowering Israel's king (Ps. 84:9b)!

84:8 “God of hosts” “*Sabaoth*” (BDB 838) usually has a military connotation (i.e., Joshua), “God, the commander of the heavenly army.” In a Babylonian astral idolatry context it refers to the “stars.” YHWH is the creator and controller of all heavenly lights.

84:9 “our shield” This is a title for God (cf. Gen. 15:1; Deut. 33:29; Ps. 18:2; 115:9-11) or Israel's king.

▣ **“Your anointed”** This could refer to the High Priest (cf. Lev. 4:3; Zechariah 3-4), but probably the King (cf. Ps. 2:2; 132:17; 1 Sam. 2:35; 16:6; 2 Sam. 19:21). In Ps. 89:18 both “shield” and “king” are used of the King of Israel.

For “anointed” see Special Topic: OT Titles of the Special Coming One.

84:10 “For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside” This is the use of the term “thousand” in a symbolic way (see Special Topic: Thousand [*eleph*]). The comparison is not fully stated, “One day with YHWH in His temple is better than a thousand days anywhere else!” (i.e., Ps. 27:4).

▣ **“the threshold”** It is true that in the ancient world, the threshold (BDB 706) was viewed as potentially demon filled, especially in Roman culture. However, in this context it seems obvious that this is a comparative statement. The psalmist would rather be at the outskirts of the temple than in the plush comfort and hospitality of the wicked.

Some commentators try to make “threshold” (BDB 706) a title for the Levite gatekeepers (cf. 1 Chr. 9:19,22; 2 Chr. 23:4). I think “threshold” (cf. Jdgs. 19:27; 1 Kgs. 14:17; 2 Chr. 3:7) fits this context best.

▣ **“tents of wickedness”** This is an anachronism from the nomadic days of Israel. The opposite is expressed in Ps. 27:5-6.

84:11 “a sun” The Aramaic Targums interpret “sun” (BDB 1039) as “bulwark” (“sun,” שמש, BDB 1039; “battlements,” חומות, BDB 1039, cf. Isa. 54:12). Battlement fits the parallelism with shield better. The OT was reluctant to use “sun” in connection with YHWH because of the widespread worship of the sun in the ANE. If “sun” is original, then it is a metaphor that focuses on light, truth, health, revelation, blessing, etc. Deity is described in this way in Isa. 60:19-20; Mal. 4:2; Rev. 21:23. He is the true, eternal light.

84:11-12 This is a summary of the believer’s worldview. God is with us and for us, even when we are physically separated from the designated place of worship. To faithful followers YHWH

1. is sun and shield
2. gives grace and glory
3. withholds no good thing (cf. Ps. 34:10b)
4. blesses those who (conditional element)
 - a. walk uprightly
 - b. trust Him

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was the psalmist away from the temple?
2. How is this Psalm related to Psalm 42?
3. Is the reference to “highways” (Ps. 84:5) literal or symbolic?
4. Why is Ps. 84:6 so hard to translate?
5. To whom does the term “anointed” (Ps. 84:9b) refer?
6. In what way(s) is YHWH like the “sun”? Why is this analogy rare in the OT?
7. List the two conditions mentioned in Ps. 84:11-12. Is the covenant conditional or unconditional?

PSALM 85

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for God's Mercy Upon the Nation <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Psalm of the sons of Korah	Prayer That The Lord Will Restore Favor to The Land	Prayer For Deliverance From National Adversary	A Prayer For the Nation's Welfare	Prayer For Peace and Justice
85:1-3	85:1-3	85:1-3	85:1-3	85:1-2 85:3
85:4-7	85:4-7	85:4-7	85:4-7	85:4-5 85:6-7
85:8-13	85:8-9 85:10-13	85:8-9 85:10-13	85:8-9 85:10-13	85:8-9 85:10-11 85:12-13

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Notice that
 1. Ps. 85:1-3 has all PERFECTS (i.e., completed action, usually past)
 2. while Ps. 85:4-7 has all IMPERFECTS (i.e., ongoing action, the current state of YHWH's anger toward Israel)
 3. Ps. 85:5-6 contain a series of three questions).
- B. Several major theological terms are personified in Ps. 85:10-13 (cf. positive in Isa. 58:8; negative in Isa. 59:14-15).
 1. lovingkindness, Ps. 85:10 – Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*)

2. truth/faithfulness, Ps. 85:10,11 – Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT
 3. righteousness, Ps. 85:10,11,13 – Special Topic: Righteousness
 4. peace, Ps. 85:10 (cf. Ps. 85:8) – Special Topic: Peace (OT)
- C. The land is affected in both positive and negative ways by how God's people live (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30). Human choices have consequences, but so do YHWH's grace and mercy!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 85:1-3

**¹O LORD, You showed favor to Your land;
You restored the captivity of Jacob.**

**²You forgave the iniquity of Your people;
You covered all their sin. Selah.**

**³You withdrew all Your fury;
You turned away from Your burning anger.**

85:1-3 Notice the powerful parallelism which denotes the character and redemptive actions of YHWH.

1. You showed favor – BDB 953, KB 1280, *Qal* PERFECT
2. You restored the fortunes – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 14:7
 - a. forgiveness
 - b. restoration to Canaan
3. You forgave the iniquity – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* PERFECT
4. You covered all their sin – BDB 491, KB 487, *Piel* PERFECT
5. You withdrew all Your fury – BDB 62, KB 74, *Qal* PERFECT
6. You turned away Your burning anger – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* PERFECT; notice
 - a. this same VERB in #2
 - b. the IMPERATIVE form in Ps. 85:4
 - c. the *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense in Ps. 85:8

YHWH has kept His covenant promises even when His covenant people did not deserve it. Sin has consequences (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30), but grace also has lasting effects because of the character of God (cf. Exod. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:27; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8)!

85:1 “Your land” Notice the different ways to refer to God’s people.

1. Your land, Ps. 85:1a
2. Jacob, Ps. 85:1b
3. Your people, Ps. 85:2a

85:2 “Selah” See note at Psalm 3:2.

85:3-4 “all” The use of “all” (BDB 481) is significant. All their sin is covered and all God’s fury is withdrawn. What inclusive good news!

85:3 “Your fury” Notice the different words that refer to YHWH’s reaction to human disobedience (cf. Ps. 78:49).

1. fury, Ps. 85:3a – BDB 720
2. burning anger, Ps. 85:3b – BDB 354 CONSTRUCT BDB 60 I
3. indignation, Ps. 85:4b – BDB 495
4. angry, Ps. 85:5a – BDB 60, VERB
5. anger, Ps. 85:5b – BDB 60, NOUN

How different these expression of God’s character are with

1. Ps. 85:1-2
2. Ps. 85:10-12

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 85:4-7

**⁴Restore us, O God of our salvation,
And cause Your indignation toward us to cease.
⁵Will You be angry with us forever?
Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?
⁶Will You not Yourself revive us again,
That Your people may rejoice in You?
⁷Show us Your lovingkindness, O LORD,
And grant us Your salvation.**

85:4-7 This strophe starts out with two prayer requests (“restore” – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE; “put away” – BDB 830, KB 974, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) and ends with a prayer request (“show” – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE).

It then follows with a series of questions related to that call for restoration.

1. Will You be angry with us forever? cf. Ps. 74:1; 79:5; 80:4
2. Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?
3. Will You not Yourself revive us again? cf. Ps. 71:20; 80:18

Israel could not understand how YHWH allowed them to be invaded and exiled (cf. Habakkuk 1)! They were His people and His witness in this world. The problem was covenant disobedience. The wrong message was being communicated to the nations (cf. Ezek. 36:22-36).

85:7 “lovingkindness” See note at Contextual Insights, B.

▣ **“Your salvation”** In Ps. 85:4 the psalmist calls YHWH “O God (*Eloah*) of our salvation” (BDB 447). See Special Topic: Salvation (OT).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 85:8-13

**⁸I will hear what God the LORD will say;
For He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones;
But let them not turn back to folly.
⁹Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,
That glory may dwell in our land.
¹⁰Lovingkindness and truth have met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
¹¹Truth springs from the earth,**

And righteousness looks down from heaven.

**¹²Indeed, the LORD will give what is good,
And our land will yield its produce.**

**¹³Righteousness will go before Him
And will make His footsteps into a way.**

85:8-12 This strophe is the answer to the psalmist's prayers. He wants God to speak to him ("Let me hear," BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* COHORTATIVE). He will pass on the message/vision.

1. peace to
 - a. His people
 - b. His godly ones (BDB 339)
2. His salvation is near
3. glory will dwell in their land (i.e., YHWH's personal presence, like the *Shekinah* cloud, but here in the temple, cf. Ps. 63:2; 102:15-16)
4. lovingkindness and faithfulness have met together
5. righteousness and peace have kissed each other
6. faithfulness springs from the earth
7. righteousness looks down from heaven
8. YHWH will give what is good
9. righteousness will go before

But notice the conditions.

1. let them not turn back to folly (BDB 493) – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. to those who fear/revere Him (Special Topic: Fear)

It is even possible the "to His godly ones" of Ps. 85:8b is also a condition for peace. There is no peace apart from a right relationship with God and then others.

Also Ps. 85:11 speaks of faithfulness as a condition for God's righteousness (i.e., God Himself) to look from heaven.

Psalm 85:10-11 is such powerful imagery of God's person. These attributes are personified as coming together to accomplish His purposes.

1. restoration from exile
2. breaking a drought
3. eschatological culmination (Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan)

85:8 "God the LORD" This is *El* plus YHWH. Usually it is YHWH *Elohim*, as in Gen. 2:4 (YHWH *Elohim*). The NJB sees these two names for God as introducing parallel lines.

"What is God's message?"

"Yahweh's message is peace."

This same approach is followed by AB (p. 285).

☐ **"But let them not turn back to folly"** This reflects the MT. The LXX understands the phrase as "and to those who turn to him their hearts." The UBS Text Project (p. 345) gives the MT a "C" rating (i.e., considerable doubt).

85:12 The promise of agricultural abundance was tied to covenant obedience (i.e., Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30). AB sees the Psalm as a pre-exilic call for rain amidst a drought. The Jewish Study Bible (p. 1377) sees the Psalm as a plea for restoration of God's people to Canaan. This is based on

1. “land” in Ps. 85:1, 9-12
2. “restore the fortunes,” as used in Jer. 30:3,18; Amos 9:14
3. Ps. 85:7, referring to a restored temple

▣ **“good thing”** To what does this refer?

1. deliverance – Exod. 18:9
2. blessings – Ps. 34:10
3. Canaan – Exod. 3:8; Deut. 1:35; 3:25; 4:21-22; 8:7,10; Jos. 23:13
4. unspecified goodness from YHWH to those who obey His covenant – Ps. 84:11

Maybe it is purposeful ambiguity that means God’s provision in every needed area. Here, agricultural abundance (cf. Ps. 67:6).

85:13 The OT often uses the imagery of a “way,” “road,” “highway” to denote the actions of God and humans (i.e., Ps. 25:4,8,9,10,12,15). The spiritual life was characterized as “a way”!

Righteousness is again personified (cf. Ps. 85:10-11) as a herald (cf. Ps. 85:8) who goes before Israel shouting the good news of YHWH’s love, care, protection, and presence with His people after exile or drought. The Jerome Bible Commentary (p. 591) sees it as possibly an eschatological reference.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Is it possible to detect the historical setting? If so, list the three options.
2. How do the VERBS of Ps. 85:1-2 relate to the VERBS of Ps. 85:3?
3. Does Ps. 85:8 refer to the psalmist or a prophet?
4. Why is Ps. 85:10-11 such powerful, moving, encouraging imagery?
5. How does Ps. 85:11 deal with both divine sovereignty and human free will?
6. Define “good” in Ps. 85:12.
7. Explain the imagery of a “path” or “way.”

PSALM 86

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Psalm of Supplication and Trust <u>MT Intro</u> A Prayer of David	Prayer for Mercy, with Meditation on the Excellencies of the LORD	Prayer for Deliverance from Personal Enemies	A Prayer For Help	Prayer in Time of Trial (Verse numbers from LXX)
86:1-5	86:1-5	86:1-7	86:1-2	86:1-2b 86:2c-4 86:3-5 86:5-6
86:6-10	86:6-7 86:8-10	86:8-11	86:6-7 86:8-10	86:7-8 86:9-10
86:11-13	86:11-13	86:12-13	86:11-13	86:11 86:12-13
86:14-17	86:14-15 86:16-17	86:14-17	86:14-17	86:14 86:15-16a 86:16b-17 86:18

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is categorized as a “personal lament.” A righteous follower of YHWH calls on his righteous God to act on his behalf.
1. righteous author, Ps. 86:1,2,3,4
 2. righteous God, Ps. 86:5,6
- B. This Psalm has a surprising universal element in Ps. 86:9 (cf. Ps. 22:27; 46:10; 47:9; 57:5,11; 64:9; 65:8; 66:1-7; 67:2-5; 98:23; 99:2-3 102:15). This verse is the theological center of the chiasm (i.e., a Hebrew poetic structure).
- C. A possible outline would be:
1. author’s theological complaint, Ps. 86:1-7
 2. hymn of praise to God, Ps. 86:8-10
 - a. His transcendence
 - b. His uniqueness (monotheism)
 3. hymn of praise to God, Ps. 86:11-17, for His immanence
- D. There are 15 IMPERATIVES OF REQUEST in this Psalm.
1. incline Your ear, Ps. 86:1 – BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 17:6; 31:2; 71:2; 102:2; same VERB in IMPERFECT in Ps. 88:2
 2. answer me, Ps. 86:1 – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 3. preserve my soul, Ps. 86:2 – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 25:20
 4. save, Ps. 86:2 – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 28:9; 31:16; 59:2; 71:2
 5. be gracious, Ps. 86:3 – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 6. make glad the soul, Ps. 86:4 – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
 7. give ear, Ps. 86:6 – BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
 8. give heed, Ps. 86:6 – BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
 9. teach me, Ps. 86:11 – BDB 34, KB 436, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 25:4,12; 27:11
 10. unite my heart, Ps. 86:11 – BDB 402, KB 405, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
 11. turn to me, Ps. 86:16 – BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 12. be gracious to me, Ps. 86:16 – same as #5
 13. grant strength, Ps. 86:16 – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 14. save, Ps. 86:16 – same as #4
 15. show me a sign, Ps. 86:17 – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- E. Notice the VOCATIVES.
1. O LORD (YHWH), Ps. 86:1, 3, 6, 11, 17
 2. O You my God (*Eloah*), Ps. 86:2
 3. O Lord (*Adon*), Ps. 86:4, 5, 8, 9, 15
 4. O God (*Elohim*), Ps. 86:10,14
 5. O Lord my God (*Eloah*), Ps. 86:12; *Eloah* also in Ps. 86:2
 6. O grant (no name/title) giver, Ps. 86:16b
- The other names/titles used are
1. God (*El*), Ps. 86:15
 2. Your name (BDB 1027), Ps. 86:9, 11, 12
- These all reflect a vibrant prayer for help to Israel’s Deity!

- F. The structure of individual Psalms is difficult to categorize. If this Psalm is an acrostic (see NASB Study Bible, p. 829), then Ps. 86:9 is the central key verse. To me, Ps. 86:8 is theologically the key verse and Ps. 86:9 is the logical extension. Monotheism was the uniqueness of Israel in the ANE (with two brief exceptions, one in Egypt and one in Assyria). See Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan, and Special Topic: Monotheism.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 86:1-5

¹**Incline Your ear, O LORD, *and* answer me;**
For I am afflicted and needy.
²**Preserve my soul, for I am a godly man;**
O You my God, save Your servant who trusts in You.
³**Be gracious to me, O LORD,**
For to You I cry all day long.
⁴**Make glad the soul of Your servant,**
For to You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
⁵**For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive,**
And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.

86:1 “Incline” This is a metaphor derived from the VERB “to bend” or “to turn” (BDB 639, KB 692). It calls on YHWH to hear His servant's plea (cf. Ps. 86:3,4,6,7).

▣ **“O LORD”** This is YHWH (i.e., the name is defined in Exod. 3:14, see Special Topic: Names for Deity). This is the covenant name for Deity. It is a form of the VERB “to be.”

There is a play between YHWH (Ps. 86:1,3,6,11), *Elohim* (Ps. 86:2,10,12) and *Adon* (Ps. 86:4,8,9,12). These represent different concepts of deity.

1. YHWH – God as Savior, Redeemer
2. *Elohim* – God as Creator, Sustainer, Provider
3. *Adonai* – God as master, owner, husband

▣ **“answer”** This was not a prayer for information but the assurance of God's personal presence and care. The psalmist has experienced this and, for whatever reason, does not now! It is a plea for God to act in a visible way.

1. to deliver (Ps. 86:7)
2. to witness (Ps. 86:8-10)

▣ **“For I am afflicted and needy”** This phrase (BDB 776 and BDB 2) could be understood in a spiritual sense to refer to the faithful remnant (see Special Topic: The Remnant, Three Senses, cf. Ps. 34:6; 35:10; 40:17; 70:5). In this Psalm it is possibly a reference to the King.

86:2 “preserve my soul, for I am a godly man” There are two terms used to describe the psalmist.

1. soul – lit. *nephesh*, BDB 659, cf. Ps. 86:4 (twice), 13,14; see notes online at Ps. 3:2 and Gen. 35:18
2. godly one/man – BDB 339, see notes online at Ps. 16:10; 50:5

This begins a series of reasons why God should act on the psalmist's behalf.

1. he is godly, Ps. 86:2 (*hasid*, BDB 339, faithful to the covenant, related to *hesed*, BDB 339)
2. he trusts in YHWH, Ps. 86:2
3. he prays to YHWH, Ps. 86:3,4,5
4. because God is also *hesed*, Ps. 86:5,15.

In the OT, death was not seen as a reunion with God but a place of silence and joylessness. The psalmist wants to praise God in worship. The concept of what happens in the afterlife is developed (i.e., progressive revelation) in the NT. Thank God for Jesus and the NT!

▣ **“save”** In the OT this referred to physical deliverance. See Special Topic: Salvation (OT).

▣ **“who trusts in You”** See notes online at Ps. 4:5.

86:3 “to You I cry all day long” This referred to prayer throughout the day (cf. Ps. 22:2; 25:5; 88:9).

86:4 “I lift up my soul” This is an idiom for recognizing YHWH's place of power (i.e., on high, in heaven, cf. Ps. 123:1) and offering one's total self to Him (cf. Ps. 25:1; 143:8; Lam. 3:41).

The cultural background could be

1. sacrifices were lifted to YHWH
2. Jewish prayer was offered with the head, eyes, and hands lifted to heaven

86:5 This is a summary of the character of YHWH (cf. Ps. 86:10,15). There are several of these summaries throughout the OT (cf. Exod. 34:6; Jonah 4:2; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8).

Man's hope is in the settled, loving character of YHWH. He is

1. good – BDB 373 II (cf. 1 Chr. 16:34; 2 Chr. 5:13; 7:3; 30:18; Ezra 3:11; Ps. 25:8; 34:8; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1,25; 135:3; 136:1; Jer. 33:11; Nah. 1:7)
2. ready to forgive – BDB 699, ADJECTIVE found only here (cf. Neh. 9:17; Ps. 130:4 for usages for the related NOUN)
3. abundant in lovingkindness – BDB 912 I CONSTRUCT BDB 338 (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2), see Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*)
4. great, Ps. 86:10 – BDB 152 (cf. Ps. 77:13)
5. do wondrous deeds, Ps. 86:10 – BDB 810, see Special Topic: Wonderful Things
6. merciful, Ps. 86:15 – BDB 933
7. gracious, Ps. 86:15 – BDB 337
8. slow to anger, Ps. 86:15 – cf. same parallel verses as #3
9. abundant in faithfulness/truth, Ps. 86:15 – cf. same parallel verses as #3

▣ **“to all who call upon You”** The scope of YHWH's love and offer of acceptance is surprising in an OT Psalm. The same universal promise is repeated in Ps. 86:9. God welcomes all who approach Him in faith and worship. See Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan.

“Calling upon” God was an act of faith expressed in public worship in Joel 2:32 and quoted by Paul in Rom. 10:9-13. See Special Topic: What Does It Mean to “Receive,” “Believe,” “Confess/Profess,” and “Call Upon?”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 86:6-10

‘Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer;

And give heed to the voice of my supplications!

**⁷In the day of my trouble I shall call upon You,
For You will answer me.**

**⁸There is no one like You among the gods, O LORD,
Nor are there any works like Yours.**

**⁹All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O LORD,
And they shall glorify Your name.**

**¹⁰For You are great and do wondrous deeds;
You alone are God.**

86:6-7 These are parallel to Ps. 86:1. They express the psalmist's confidence in YHWH's personal presence and care.

86:7 "In the day of my trouble" The psalmist's plight is described further in Ps. 86:14. These enemies are described in several ways.

1. arrogant men have risen up against me
2. an assembly of violent men have sought my life (*nephesh*, see note online at Gen. 35:18)
3. they have not set You before them
4. those who hate me, Ps. 86:17b

86:8 "There is no one like You" This is an affirmation of monotheism (cf. Ps. 86:10b), see Special Topic: Monotheism. This reflects Exod. 15:11.

▣ **"among the gods"** This is the Hebrew term *elohim*, used of spiritual beings (angels). This term is also used of human judges in the OT. See Special Topic: Names For Deity.

▣ **"Nor are there any works like Yours"** YHWH is the God of creation. He is the only creator, all other beings are created. He is the God who acts. The idols of the nations cannot see, hear, or act!

86:9 "All nations whom You have made shall come" If there is only one creator God and all humans are made in His image (Gen. 1:26-27) and God has promised to redeem all fallen humans (Gen. 3:15), then God's love for all humans must be the focus of God's redemptive activities. See Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan.

This verse expresses the assertion that YHWH created the nations (cf. Deut. 32:8 in the LXX, which asserts YHWH gave each nation a national angel, cf. Deut. 29:26; Daniel 10).

▣ **"they shall glorify Your name"** Gentiles responding in faith and worship will glorify YHWH's love and redemption (cf. Isa. 66:23c).

If Ps. 86:14-15 refers to rebellious Jews, the contrast with believing Gentiles is even more powerful!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 86:11-13

**¹¹Teach me Your way, O LORD;
I will walk in Your truth;
Unite my heart to fear Your name.**

**¹²I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
And will glorify Your name forever.**

**¹³For Your lovingkindness toward me is great,
And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.**

86:11-13 This stanza calls on YHWH (two IMPERATIVES) to provide what His faithful follower needs—instruction and a united, pure heart. In return the follower will “teach,” “walk,” “fear,” “give thanks,” and “glorify” YHWH. This is the covenant order: God provides, faithful followers respond.

▣ **“Your way. . .Your truth. . .Your name”** These are obviously in a parallel relationship. Biblical faith is

1. a daily lifestyle
2. cognitive truth
3. a person to completely trust in/on

I usually say it is a person (Jesus) to welcome; truths about that person to believe (the Bible); and a life like that person’s to live! All of these elements are necessary for a full, complete, and mature biblical faith!

86:11,12 “unite my heart. . .with all my heart” This is a Hebrew idiom for total allegiance and dedication (i.e., Jer. 24:7; 32:39; Ezek. 11:33; 18:31; 36:26).

86:12 “I will give thanks. . .I will glorify” These two VERBS are COHORTATIVES.

1. give thanks – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. glorify – BDB 457, KB 455, *Piel* COHORTATIVE

▣ **“Your name”** Calling on YHWH’s name (i.e., His person, character) goes back to Gen. 4:26 (cf. Gen. 12:8; 21:33; Ps. 80:18; 145:1-2; Dan. 9:19; Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:9-13). These are acts of faith, worship, and thanksgiving. Faithful followers publicly call out to the invisible God of creation and redemption. See Special Topic at Ps. 86:5 and Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

▣ **“forever”** See Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*).

86:13 “delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol” The VERB (BDB 664, KB 717) is a *Hiphil* PERFECT and, therefore, could be understood as past, present, or future (only context can determine). *Sheol* is the holding place of the dead. The Jews buried their loved ones, therefore, it was viewed phenomenologically as being in the center of the earth. See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead?

The psalmist’s reference has been understood in several ways.

1. sickness
2. covenant enemies (fellow Jews)
3. external enemies (the surrounding nations)
4. future end-time sense (eschatological)

The term “depths” is literally the ADJECTIVE “lowest” (BDB 1066, cf. Deut. 32:22).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 86:14-17

**¹⁴O God, arrogant men have risen up against me,
And a band of violent men have sought my life,
And they have not set You before them.**

**¹⁵But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.**

¹⁶Turn to me, and be gracious to me;
 Oh grant Your strength to Your servant,
 And save the son of Your handmaid.
¹⁷Show me a sign for good,
 That those who hate me may see *it* and be ashamed,
 Because You, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

86:14 God's faithful followers have enemies! Who these are is uncertain. Whoever they are, they do not know nor recognize God or His people (cf. Ps. 54:3, similar in Ps. 36:1).

86:15 See notes at Psalm 86:5.

86:16 This is parallel to Ps. 86:1 and 3.

▣ **“save the son of Your handmaid”** This is an idiom for a godly family who serves YHWH (i.e., Ps. 116:16).

86:17 Does this verse imply a plea for those of Ps. 86:14 to repent or is it a call for public justice? Psalm 112:10 may relate to this verse.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How does the psalmist describe himself in Ps. 86:1-3?
2. Explain how Ps. 86:8 fits Israel's unique view of the oneness and onliness of YHWH.
3. Explain the universal emphasis of Ps. 86:9.
4. List the names for deity used in this Psalm and their theological significance.
5. Define monotheism and its implication to Ps. 86:5 and 9.
6. List the characteristics of YHWH in Ps. 86:5, 10, 15.

PSALM 87

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Privileges of Citizenship in Zion <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. A Song	The Glories of the City of God	Sons Praising Zion As the Mother of Believers Everywhere	In Praise of Jerusalem	Zion, Mother of Nations
87:1-7	87:1-3	87:1-3	87:1-3	87:1-2
				87:3
	87:4	87:4	87:4	87:4
	87:5-6	87:5-6	87:5-7	87:5
				87:6-7
	87:7	87:7		

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm praises YHWH's choice of a people to reveal and represent Himself to the other nations.
- B. The imagery used is one of nations (cf. Ps. 87:4). YHWH set the boundaries of all the nations (cf. LXX, Deut. 32:8, i.e., He is in control of geography and history).
The covenant nation was made up of
 1. descendants of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; Deut. 7:6-8)
 2. descendants of the Patriarchs (Isaac, Jacob/Israel)

3. a special land, Canaan
 4. a special city, Jerusalem
 5. a special mountain, Moriah (i.e., the temple, cf. Deut. 12:5,11,21; 14:23,24; 16:2,6,11, etc.)
- C. This special nation (cf. Exod. 19:5-6) is crucial for reaching all nations (see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan.
- D. As I read this Psalm I ask myself, "Is this still God's special place?" I struggle with this; please take a moment and read the Special Topic: OT Predictions of the Future vs. NT Predictions. The NT has universalized the OT promises to the world. The gospel, not Israel, is the full revelation of YHWH!
- E. Psalm 87:4 implies an eschatological period where all people are part of God's people (i.e., Isa. 2:2-4; 12:4-5; 25:6-9; 42:6-12; 45:22-23; 49:5-6; 51:4-5; 60:1-3; 66:23).
- F. The UBS *Handbook*, p. 757, brings up the question of who the speaker is in Ps. 87:4 and 5. It suggests, and I agree, that Ps. 87:4 must be God (because Deity is mentioned in the FIRST PERSON, "Me"), while Ps. 87:5 is the psalmist (because Deity is mentioned in the THIRD PERSON, also Ps. 87:6).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 87:1-7

- ¹His foundation is in the holy mountains.
- ²The LORD loves the gates of Zion
More than all the *other* dwelling places of Jacob.
- ³Glorious things are spoken of you,
O city of God. Selah.
- ⁴"I shall mention Rahab and Babylon among those who know Me;
Behold, Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia:
"This one was born there."
- ⁵But of Zion it shall be said, "This one and that one were born in her";
And the Most High Himself will establish her.
- ⁶The Lord will count when He registers the peoples,
"This one was born there." Selah.
- ⁷Then those who sing as well as those who play the flutes *shall say*,
"All my springs *of joy* are in you."

87:1 "foundation" This Hebrew root (BDB 414) has several connotations.

1. used in Ezra 7:9 as the beginning of something
2. foundation of a city – Ps. 137:7; Lam. 4:11; Micah 1:6
3. laying a foundation in a figurative sense – Isa. 28:16
4. creation of the earth – 2 Sam. 22:16; Ps. 18:16; 78:69; 82:5; Isa. 24:18; 40:21; Jer. 31:37
5. imagery related to mountains – Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:7
6. from the day of the foundation of the temple – 2 Chr. 8:16 or its side chambers – Ezek. 41:8

▣ **“the holy mountains”** Mountains symbolize

1. permanence
2. stability
3. closeness to God (Ps. 121:1)
4. pillars of the earth

In this context it obviously is imagery connected to

1. Jerusalem/Zion (cf. Ps. 2:6; 48:1)
2. the temple
3. the covenant people

The PLURAL may relate to the fact that Jerusalem was built on seven hills. For “Zion” see notes online at Ps. 2:6; 9:11 and 20:2.

YHWH is linked to several mountains.

1. Mt. Sinai/Horeb (Exodus 19-20)
2. Mt. Seir/Paran (Deut. 33:2; Hab. 3:3)
3. Mt. Moriah (Genesis 22; Ezek. 20:40)
4. a mountain in the north (cf. Ps. 48:2; Isa. 14:13; Ezek. 28:14,16)

87:2 This refers to Jerusalem/Zion and Judah (cf. Ps. 78:67-68). Judah was to be the tribe of the Messiah (cf. Gen. 49:8-12). “Jacob” refers to all the tribes that descended from Jacob/Israel. It became a collective term for the covenant people.

▣ **“The LORD loves”** YHWH’s love for Jerusalem is also specifically stated in Ps. 78:68. It is His chosen place (cf. Ps. 132:13).

▣ **“city of God”** This refers to Jerusalem (cf. Ps. 46:4; 48:8). See Special Topic: Jerusalem.

▣ **“Selah”** This term seems to close a literary unit, see Ps. 87:6. For full note on the suggested meanings see Ps. 3:2.

87:4 “I shall mention” This VERB (BDB 289, KB 269, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) can be understood as “record” (BDB 271, #4, as the title of a public officer who records (cf. 2 Sam. 8:16; 20:24; 1 Kgs. 4:3; 2 Kgs. 18:18,37; 1 Chr. 18:15; 2 Chr. 34:8; Isa. 36:3,22), thereby linking it to the idea of a city registry (Ps. 87:5-6).

▣ **“among those who know Me”** This implies that Gentiles from these countries have become believers and followers of YHWH. They are now citizens of the new eschatological city of God, “New Jerusalem” (cf. Revelation 21).

See Special Topic: Know.

87:4-5 The psalmist lists several nations.

1. Rahab (i.e., Egypt, cf. Ps. 89:10; Isa. 30:7)
2. Babylon (one wonders why Assyria is not mentioned, possibly giving an indication of the date of the Psalm’s composition)
3. Philistia
4. Tyre (i.e., Phoenicia)
5. Ethiopia (i.e., Cush)

The purpose of their being mentioned is to compare their origins. In a sense all the nations came from God’s sovereignty (cf. LXX, Deut. 32:8), but Israel was His special people (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; Rom. 9:4-5).

87:5 The first line of Ps. 87:5 is difficult but in context of the universal emphasis of Ps. 87:4, I think it refers to believers in YHWH having their citizenship transferred to God's holy city—Zion.

87:6 “registers” The imagery is that of the list of citizens kept by ANE cities. In a symbolic way it will show Israel was from Zion, God's special city, the unique place of the worship of YHWH (cf. Ps. 87:7).

See Special Topic: The Two Books of God.

87:7 “springs” The term (BDB 745) is used in the symbolic sense of origins or the source of God's people (cf. Deut. 33:28).

PSALM 88

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Petition to Be Saved From Death <u>MT Intro</u> A Song. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. For the choir director; according to Mahalath, Leannoth. A Maskil of Heman the Ezrahite	A Cry for Help	Desperate Prayer for Healing in Sickness	A Cry for Help	Prayer in Great Distress
88:1-9	88:1-2 88:3-7	88:1-2 88:3-7	88:1-2 88:3-7	88:1-2 88:3-5 88:6-7
	88:8-9	88:8-12	88:8-9	88:8-9
88:10-12	88:10-12		88:10-12	88:10-12
88:13-18	88:13-18	88:13-18	88:13-18	88:13-16 88:17-18

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is characterized by
 1. a series of questions related to the author's sense of rejection by God, cf. Ps. 88:10-12,14. This Psalm ends with no hope or relief in sight! This is a "dark" Psalm!
 2. a series of titles/names for the afterlife
 - a. *Sheol*, Ps. 88:3b – BDB 982, see Special Topic: *Sheol*
 - b. the pit, Ps. 88:4a – BDB 92 I
 - c. among the dead, Ps. 88:5a – BDB 559

- d. who lie in the grave, Ps. 88:5b – BDB 868
- e. whom You remember no more, Ps. 88:5c
- f. cut off from Your hand, Ps. 88:5d, cf. Lam. 3:54
- g. the lowest pit, Ps. 88:6a – BDB 1066
- h. dark places, Ps. 88:6b – BDB 365
- i. the depths, Ps. 88:6b – BDB 846 (g, h, i are parallel)
- j. the dead, Ps. 88:10a – BDB 559
- k. the departed spirits, Ps. 88:10b – BDB 952 I
- l. the grave, Ps. 88:11a – BDB 868
- m. the place of destruction, Ps. 88:11b – lit. *abaddon* – BDB 2
- n. the darkness, Ps. 88:12a – BDB 365, cf. 1 Sam. 2:9; Job 10:21; 17:13; 18:18
- o. the land of forgetfulness, Ps. 88:12b – BDB 75 CONSTRUCT BDB 674 (unique to this Psalm, cf. Ps. 6:5)
- p. darkness, Ps. 88:18b – BDB 365

B. Notice the different words used to describe God's rejection.

- 1. Your wrath, Ps. 88:7a – BDB 404
- 2. Your waves, Ps. 88:7b – BDB 991, cf. Ps. 42:7; 69:1,14-15; Jonah 2:3
- 3. You reject, Ps. 88:14a – VERB, BDB 276 I, KB 276, *Qal* IMPERFECT
- 4. You hide Your face, Ps. 88:14b – VERB, BDB 711, KB 771, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
- 5. Your terrors, Ps. 88:15b – BDB 33
- 6. Your burning anger, Ps. 88:16a – BDB 354
- 7. Your terrors, Ps. 88:16b – BDB 130 (only here and Job 6:4)

C. It is hard from this brief Psalm to know if the psalmist is

- 1. sick (possibly leprosy because of his abandonment by family and friends)
- 2. suffering from judgment
- 3. feeling a sense of being alone
- 4. fearful of life's circumstances

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 88:1-9

- ¹O LORD, the God of my salvation,
I have cried out by day and in the night before You.
- ²Let my prayer come before You;
Incline Your ear to my cry!
- ³For my soul has had enough troubles,
And my life has drawn near to Sheol.
- ⁴I am reckoned among those who go down to the pit;
I have become like a man without strength,
- ⁵Forsaken among the dead,
Like the slain who lie in the grave,
Whom You remember no more,
And they are cut off from Your hand.
- ⁶You have put me in the lowest pit,

In dark places, in the depths.

⁷Your wrath has rested upon me,

And You have afflicted me with all Your waves.

Selah.

⁸You have removed my acquaintances far from me;

You have made me an object of loathing to them;

I am shut up and cannot go out.

⁹My eye has wasted away because of affliction;

I have called upon You every day, O LORD;

I have spread out my hands to You.

88:1 “O LORD” This Psalm uses the covenant name for Deity, YHWH, in a VOCATIVE sense three times. See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

▣ **“the God of my salvation”** This title for Deity (cf. Ps. 24:5; 27:9) is descriptive of what the psalmist wants YHWH to do for him, “save,” “deliver,” “act on his behalf.” This opening verse is the most “positive” line of the Psalm. YHWH is the Covenant God and the psalmist prays but senses no response. He even feels God has purposefully caused his plight!

▣ **“I”** Notice the number of FIRST PERSON SINGULAR PRONOUNS and SECOND PERSON SINGULAR PRONOUNS (“You”). This is a very personal cry from a believer to his God.

▣ **“I have cried out”** This VERB (BDB 858, KB 1042) is the first of many PERFECT VERBS. The psalmist is asserting his diligent seeking of God but God has not yet responded (cf. Ps. 88:13-18).

▣ **“by day and in the night”** This phrase is the psalmist’s way of asserting his constant prayer (cf. Ps. 22:2; 25:5; 86:3).

88:2 This verse has two parallel requests.

1. let my prayer come before You – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (cf. Ps. 18:6); the psalmist felt his prayer was not being heard (cf. Ps. 88:9,13,14)
2. incline Your ear to my cry – BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (cf. Ps. 17:6; 31:2; 71:2; 86:1; 102:2)

88:3-9 The psalmist lists the reasons why God should hear and respond (the PERFECT describes a settled condition).

1. his soul (BDB 659) is full (another PERFECT) of troubles, Ps. 88:3a
2. his life (BDB 313) has arrived (another PERFECT) near to *Sheol* (see Special Topic: Where Are the Dead?), Ps. 88:3b
3. he is reckoned (another PERFECT) among those who go down to the pit (cf. Ps. 28:1; 143:7), Ps. 88:4a
4. he has become (another PERFECT) like a man without strength (i.e., helpless, BDB 33, only here in the OT; Aramaic loan word), Ps. 88:4b
5. he has been forsaken “among the dead”; the ADJECTIVE translated “forsaken” is lit. “freed,” BDB 344, Ps. 88:5a
NKJV “adrift”
TEV, JPSOA “abandoned”

NJB “left alone”

The MT has “freed” and seems to refer to the freedom from all the responsibilities of life (cf. USB Text Project, p. 350).

6. he whom You remember (another PERFECT) no more, Ps. 88:5c
7. he whom You cut off (another PERFECT) from Your hand, Ps. 88:5d
8. he whom You have put (another PERFECT) in the lowest pit, Ps. 88:6a
9. he whom You have put in dark places, in the depths, Ps. 88:6b
10. he on whom Your wrath has rested (lit. “lies heavy,” another PERFECT) Ps. 88:7a (this VERB BDB 701, KB 759 is mostly used of YHWH supporting someone but here, the antithesis)
11. he whom You have afflicted (lit. “overwhelmed,” another PERFECT) with all Your waves, Ps. 88:7b
12. he whom You have removed his acquaintances far away (another PERFECT), Ps. 88:8a
13. he whom You have made an object of loathing (another PERFECT), Ps. 88:8b
14. he whom You have shut up, Ps. 88:8c
15. his eyes have wasted away (another PERFECT), Ps. 88:9a
16. he has called upon You every day (another PERFECT), cf. Ps. 88:1b, 9b
17. he has spread out his hands (i.e., prayer, another PERFECT) to You, Ps. 88:9c

Notice the combination of

1. the psalmist’s acts
2. the things he asserts that God has done to him

88:7 “Selah” See notes at Psalm 3:2.

88:8 “acquaintances” This (BDB 393, KB 390) is a *Pual* PARTICIPLE from the VERB “to know” (see Special Topic: Know). The same form is also in Ps. 88:18 along with

1. lover – BDB 12, KB 17 *Qal* PARTICIPLE
2. friend – BDB 945

This man felt totally alienated from God and other humans!

88:9 Psalm 88:9 is similar in content to Ps. 88:1 and may be an example of *inclusio*.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 88:10-12

¹⁰**Will You perform wonders for the dead?**

Will the departed spirits rise and praise You?

Selah.

¹¹**Will Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave,**

Your faithfulness in Abaddon?

¹²**Will Your wonders be made known in the darkness?**

And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

88:10-12 This strophe describes the general OT view of the joyless, silent existence of the conscious soul/person/self in the afterlife.

1. God did not deliver (“save”) from the dead
2. the dead do not praise God (cf. Ps. 6:5; 30:9; 115:17; Isa. 38:18)
3. God’s faithfulness is not declared in the grave (cf. Isa. 38:18)
4. God’s acts of deliverance (BDB 810, see Special Topic: Wonderful Things) are not declared in the darkness
5. God’s righteousness (i.e., His acts of salvation) is not declared in the land of forgetfulness

88:10**NASB** “the departed spirits”**NKJV, TEV** “the dead”**NRSV, JPSOA,****REB** “the shades”**NJB** “the shadows”

This Hebrew root (BDB 952) has two connotations/uses.

1. race of giants (see Special Topic: Terms Used for Tall/Powerful Warriors or People Groups) – Gen. 14:5; 15:20; Deut. 2:20; 3:11; Jos. 17:15; 1 Chr. 20:4
2. the departed/the conscious dead – Job 26:5-6; Pro. 2:18; 9:18; 21:16; Isa. 14:9; 26:11-19; this usage is common in Wisdom Literature (see Special Topic: Wisdom Literature)

Because of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 it is possible to see these as departed kings and powerful humans, now in *Sheol*, their power and prestige gone. There is a detailed discussion of this term in NIDOTTE, vol. 3, pp. 1173-1180.

▣ “Selah” See notes at Psalm 3:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 88:13-18

¹³But I, O LORD, have cried out to You for help,
And in the morning my prayer comes before You.

¹⁴O LORD, why do You reject my soul?
Why do You hide Your face from me?

¹⁵I was afflicted and about to die from my youth on;
I suffer Your terrors; I am overcome.

¹⁶Your burning anger has passed over me;
Your terrors have destroyed me.

¹⁷They have surrounded me like water all day long;
They have encompassed me altogether.

¹⁸You have removed lover and friend far from me;
My acquaintances are *in* darkness.

88:13-18 This repeats the emphasis of the previous verses. The psalmist feels estranged from God and family and friends! He is alone! This Psalm ends in despair (cf. Ps. 88:14)! He does not understand what is happening to him, either physically or spiritually!

88:15 Does this verse imply that the psalmist has been sick from his youth and is near death or is this imagery of a prolonged sense of abandonment by God?

The VERB in the MT (BDB 806, KB 918, *Qal* IMPERFECT) can be from one of two roots.

1. אָפַן – BDB 67, either (1) “to be helpless,” (2) “to be confused,” or (3) “very, very much”
2. פָּן – found only here and meaning uncertain
3. פָּגַג – “to grow numb” (NET Bible)

This verse is difficult to translate because the MT is difficult (JPSOA footnote)

LXX “and after being exalted,
I was humbled and became perplexed”

Peshitta “I have been proud, but now I am humbled and crushed”

88:18 “in darkness” The same consonants can mean “withholding” (Peshitta). JPSOA takes the MT “darkness” and translates it as “cannot see.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. As you read this Psalm what is your first impression?
2. What is the psalmist’s problem?
3. Why does he feel God has abandoned him? Does he express any hope? How?
4. Describe the OT view of the afterlife.
5. Why is Ps. 88:4 so painful?
6. Does the psalmist express any hope that God will hear, come, help?

PSALM 89

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Lord's Covenant with David, and Israel's Afflictions <u>MT Intro</u> A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite	Remembering the Covenant with David, and Sorrow for Lost Blessings	A King Prays for Deliverance From His Enemies	A Hymn in Time of National Trouble	Hymn and Prayer to God the Faithful
89:1-4	89:1-2 89:3-4	89:1-2 89:3-4	89:1-4	89:1-2 89:3-4
89:5-10	89:5-10	89:5-18	89:5-14	89:5-6 89:7-8 89:9-10
89:11-18	89:11-18		89:15-18 God's Promise to David	89:11-12 89:13-14 89:15-16 89:17-18
89:19-29	89:19-23 89:24-29	89:19-37	89:19-29	89:19 89:20-21 89:22-23 89:24-25 89:26-27 89:28-29
89:30-37	89:30-37		89:30-34 89:35-37 Lament Over the Defeat of the King	89:30-31 89:32-33 89:34-35 89:36-37
89:38-45	89:38-45	89:38-45	89:38-45	89:38-39 89:40-41 89:42-43 89:44-45
89:46-48	89:46-48	89:46-48	89:46-48	89:46-48
89:49-51	89:49-51	89:49-51	89:49-51	89:49-51
89:52	89:52	89:52	89:52	89:52

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm affirms YHWH's permanent choice of Abraham and his descendants by covenant promise (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 15:12-21). These covenant promises are fully embodied in David and his royal Judean seed (cf. 2 Samuel 7; 1 Kgs. 8:16).
- B. YHWH is the creator and sustainer of His people (Ps. 89:11-18). He is the leader of the heavenly council (Ps. 89:5-10,19), which exists to accomplish His purposes.
- C. But a tragedy has occurred: His people and their leaders are not faithful, not obedient (Ps. 89:38-45). Now there is a problem.
 1. God has made promises
 2. His people have failedWhat will He do (Ps. 89:46-48,49-51)?
- D. It is interesting that this Psalm, unlike most Psalms, does not focus on Jerusalem (but Ps. 89:1-2,15 implies temple worship) and the temple, but on the Davidic seed. It is surely drawing from 2 Samuel 7, which is about both
 1. the building of the temple
 2. the continuing of the Davidic dynastyNumber 1 is not even specifically mentioned in this Psalm.
- E. Just a note about how the NT reinterprets these OT promises to Israel. Please see my commentaries online (www.freebiblecommentary.org) on Romans 2:28-29; 9:6; Gal. 3:7-9,26; 6:16; 1 Pet. 3:6! The NT has widened the promises of God to include all the children of Adam (see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan).
- F. On the theological tension between conditional and unconditional covenant promises, see notes at Ps. 89:30-37.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 89:1-4

¹I will sing of the lovingkindness of the LORD forever;
To all generations I will make known Your faithfulness with my mouth.

²For I have said, “Lovingkindness will be built up forever;
In the heavens You will establish Your faithfulness.”

³“I have made a covenant with My chosen;
I have sworn to David My servant,

⁴I will establish your seed forever
And build up your throne to all generations.” Selah.

89:1-4 This strophe in NASB is divided into two strophes (Ps. 89:1-2, 3-4) by NKJV, NRSV, NJB because there are two speakers.

1. the psalmist in Ps. 89:1-2
 - a. I will sing – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
 - b. I will make known – BDB 393, KB 390, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
 - c. I have said. . . – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* PERFECT
2. YHWH Himself in Ps. 89:3-4
 - a. I have made a covenant – BDB 503, KB 500, *Qal* PERFECT
 - b. I have sworn – BDB 989, KB 1396, *Niphal* PERFECT
 - c. I will establish – BDB 465, KB 464, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
 - d. I will build up – BDB 124, KB 139, *Qal* PERFECT with *waw* (links to PERFECTS in a and b)

89:1 There are three words that occur several times in this Psalm.

1. lovingkindness, Ps. 89:1,2,14,24,28,33,49 – see Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*)
2. forever, Ps. 89:1,2,4,28,37,52 – see Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*)
3. faithfulness, Ps. 89:1,2,5,8,24,33,49 – see Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT

They establish the hope of Israel in God’s call, grace, protection, and provision forever.

The term “forever” is parallel to “all generations” (Ps. 89:1b, 4b).

89:3 “covenant” See Special Topic: Covenant.

▣ **“My chosen. . .David”** This probably refers to

1. the choice of David as king over Saul, 1 Samuel 16; 2 Sam. 7:8
2. the promise to David about his descendants, 2 Sam. 7:12-17

▣ **“My Servant”** This becomes an honorific title (some examples).

1. Moses – Num. 12:7; Jos. 1:2
2. Joshua – Jdgs. 2:8
3. David – 1 Kgs. 8:24,25,26; Ps. 89:20
4. Solomon – 1 Kgs. 8:28
5. Messiah – Isa. 42:1; 52:13-53:12
6. Israel – Isa. 41:8; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1,21

89:4 This is an allusion to 2 Samuel 7. This Psalm has several allusions to YHWH's promise to David and his descendants.

1. Ps. 89:4 – 2 Sam. 7:13,16
2. Ps. 89:22 – 2 Sam. 7:10
3. Ps. 89:23 – 2 Sam. 7:9
4. Ps. 89:29 – 2 Sam. 7:13,16
5. Ps. 89:33 – 2 Sam. 7:15
6. Ps. 89:35 – 2 Sam. 7:8-17

▣ **“your throne to all generations”** This same promise is made in Isa. 9:7; Dan. 2:44; 7:14,18,27; Luke 1:33. YHWH has an eternal redemptive plan for all humans. See Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan.

The term “generations” is used of

1. promise to Noah – Gen. 9:12
2. promise to Abram – Gen. 17:7,9
3. promise to Israel – Deut. 7:9
4. promise to David – Ps. 89:4 (reflecting 2 Sam. 7:13,16)

▣ **“Selah”** This occurs at the end of Ps. 89:4, 37, 45, 48. It often serves to close a strophe. On the meaning of the word (BDB 699) see note online at Ps. 3:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 89:5-10

⁵The heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD;
Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.
⁶For who in the skies is comparable to the LORD?
Who among the sons of the mighty is like the LORD,
⁷A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones,
And awesome above all those who are around Him?
⁸O Lord GOD of hosts, who is like You, O mighty LORD?
Your faithfulness also surrounds You.
⁹You rule the swelling of the sea;
When its waves rise, You still them.
¹⁰You Yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain;
You scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm.

89:5-10 This strophe has two themes.

1. YHWH is the leader of the angelic council (Ps. 89:5-8)
 - a. the heavens – personified angelic council, Ps. 89:5a
 - b. the assembly of the holy ones, Ps. 89:5b – BDB 874 CONSTRUCT BDB 872
 - c. the sons of gods, Ps. 89:6 – BDB 119 CONSTRUCT BDB 42, see notes at Ps. 29:1 and 82:1
 - d. the council of the holy ones, Ps. 89:7a – BDB 691 CONSTRUCT BDB 872
 - e. all those who are around Him, Ps. 89:7b
 - f. for a good discussion of the Hebrew terminology see Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed., p. 412
2. YHWH as creator (i.e., over watery chaos) and holy warrior for Israel (i.e., over Egypt and Canaan, Ps. 89:9-10)

There are two Special Topics that help clarify the use of “son”

1. Special Topic: The Son of God
2. Special Topic: The Sons of God (Genesis 6)

Also note the excellent article in NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 671-677, esp. 676.

89:5 “the heavens” This is either

1. a personification of
 - a. earth
 - b. God’s abode (parallel to “who in the skies”)
2. another way to refer to the angelic council (see note above)

▣ **“O LORD”** Notice the number of names/titles for Deity in this strophe.

1. LORD, Ps. 89:2, 5, 6 (twice), 8 – YHWH
2. God, Ps. 89:7 – *El*
3. God of hosts, Ps. 89:8 – *Eloah Sabaoth*
4. O mighty LORD, Ps. 89:8 – *Yah* (cf. Ps. 68:4); the ADJECTIVE “mighty” (BDB 340) is found only here in the OT

89:6-8 These questions are often used in two senses.

1. an affirmation of monotheism, see Special Topic: Monotheism
2. a way of depreciating the pagan idols (possibly Ps. 82:1)

89:8 “Your faithfulness also surrounds You” This phrase is difficult to understand. Some possibilities:

1. faithfulness is like a robe wrapped about YHWH
2. He is faithful in all things (TEV)
3. He is constant (NJB, i.e., to His word)

89:10 “Rahab” This (BDB 923) can refer to

1. watery chaos monster (cf. Ps. 74:12-17, i.e. Babylonian creation accounts, see my notes online on Intro. to Genesis 1-11)
2. Egypt (i.e., its defeat by YHWH and the exodus, cf. Isa. 51:9-11)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 89:11-18

¹¹The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours;

The world and all it contains, You have founded them.

¹²The north and the south, You have created them;

Tabor and Hermon shout for joy at Your name.

¹³You have a strong arm;

Your hand is mighty, Your right hand is exalted.

¹⁴Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne;

Lovingkindness and truth go before You.

¹⁵How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!

O LORD, they walk in the light of Your countenance.

¹⁶In Your name they rejoice all the day,

And by Your righteousness they are exalted.

¹⁷For You are the glory of their strength,

And by Your favor our horn is exalted.
¹⁸**For our shield belongs to the LORD,**
And our king to the Holy One of Israel.

89:11-18 This strophe praises YHWH and expresses how blessed His people are.

1. YHWH
 - a. the heavens are His
 - b. the earth is His because He founded them (i.e., YHWH as creator, cf. Ps. 24:1-2; 78:69b; 102:25; Isa. 51:13,16)
 - c. the north and south were created by Him (imagery similar to Job 26:7)
 - d. the mountains of Tabor and Hermon are personified and shout at His name (cf. Ps. 65:12; 98:8)
 - e. His power (i.e., hand or arm, cf. Ps. 89:10, see Special Topic: Hand) to act is praised
 - (1) He has a strong arm
 - (2) His hand is mighty
 - (3) His right hand is exalted
 - f. four of His characteristics are personified as characterizing His person and reign (cf. Ps. 97:2)
 - (1) righteousness (see Special Topic: Righteousness)
 - (2) justice (see Special Topic: Judge, Justice, Judgment)
 - (3) lovingkindness (see Special Topic: Lovingkindness [*hesed*])
 - (4) truth/faithfulness (see Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT)
 - g. He is “the Holy One of Israel” (cf. Ps. 71:22; 78:41; Isa. 1:4; see Special Topic: The Holy One)
2. His people
 - a. blessed are those who hear the trumpet (i.e., temple worship)
 - b. walk in the light of His countenance (lit. “face,” which denotes YHWH’s personal presence, cf. Ps. 90:8)
 - c. rejoice all day in His name (i.e., worship setting or military victory)
 - d. exalted by YHWH’s righteousness (i.e., holy character and revelation)
 - e. YHWH is their glory and strength (cf. Ps. 28:8)
 - f. horn (i.e., power, prestige)
 - g. protection (lit. “shield”) is YHWH (cf. Ps. 47:9)
 - h. the king is also of YHWH

The PRONOUN “our” in Ps. 89:17-18 shows that YHWH uses the king of Israel as His “protecting/victorious horn and shield” (i.e., f-h).

89:12 “the north and the south” It is possible these two terms are the names of two more mountains (i.e., Zaphon, i.e., the name of the Mt. of *Ba’al*, north of Ugarit; and Yamin or the emendation linking Amana, a mountain in southern Turkey, cf. Sol. 4:8). This would form a parallel with Tabor and Hermon.

Most translators take them as opposite points of the compass showing YHWH’s universal reign as creator.

89:16 “Your name. . .Your righteousness” These are parallel and both refer to YHWH Himself.

9:17 “horn” This is an idiom of power (cf. Ps. 75:10; 89:24; 92:10; 148:14), taken from the animal realm.

89:18 “shield. . .king” These could both refer to YHWH or they could refer to the Davidic king (cf. Ps. 89:19-29; Ps. 84:10), God’s anointed one to accomplish His purposes.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 89:19-29

¹⁹Once You spoke in vision to Your godly ones,
And said, “I have given help to one who is mighty;
I have exalted one chosen from the people.
²⁰I have found David My servant;
With My holy oil I have anointed him,
²¹With whom My hand will be established;
My arm also will strengthen him.
²²The enemy will not deceive him,
Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
²³But I shall crush his adversaries before him,
And strike those who hate him.
²⁴My faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with him,
And in My name his horn will be exalted.
²⁵I shall also set his hand on the sea
And his right hand on the rivers.
²⁶He will cry to Me, ‘You are my Father,
My God, and the rock of my salvation.’
²⁷I also shall make him *My* firstborn,
The highest of the kings of the earth.
²⁸My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever,
And My covenant shall be confirmed to him.
²⁹So I will establish his descendants forever
And his throne as the days of heaven.”

89:19-29 This strophe is specifically about King David and his royal Judean descendants (cf. 2 Samuel 7). He becomes a type/symbol of the Messiah (see Special Topic: Messiah).

YHWH has spoken to His people (lit. Your godly/faithful [BDB 339] ones) about His special choice for the King of Israel (Ps. 89:19).

1. he was exalted, Ps. 89:19
2. he was chosen from among the people, Ps. 89:19
3. he was found, Ps. 89:20
4. he was anointed, Ps. 89:20 (cf. 1 Sam. 16:1-13; this is the Hebrew VERB from which the title “Messiah” comes, see Special Topic: OT Titles of the Special Coming One)
5. he was established, Ps. 89:21
6. he was strengthened, Ps. 89:21
7. he will not be deceived (BDB 674 II) or afflicted, Ps. 89:22
8. his adversaries will be crushed, Ps. 89:23
9. YHWH’s personified characteristics (i.e., faithfulness and lovingkindness) will accompany him, Ps. 89:24
10. YHWH’s name will exalt his horn, Ps. 89:24

11. he will control his territory, Ps. 89:25 (i.e., from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates River, cf. Exod. 23:31; Deut. 1:7-8)
12. he will call God in intimate ways, Ps. 89:26
 - a. my Father (see Special Topic: Fatherhood of God and Special Topic: Father)
 - b. my God (*El*)
 - c. the rock of my salvation (cf. Ps. 95:1)
13. He will be appointed (no sexual generation) the honorific title “My firstborn” (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chr. 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; Ps. 2:7), Ps. 89:27
14. he will be made the highest of the kings of the earth (cf. Ps. 72:11, obviously a Messianic title, cf. 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 1:5; 17:14; 19:16, a title for YHWH from Dan. 2:47; the kingdom will be universal, cf. Micah 5:4), Ps. 89:27
15. like #9, another personified characteristic of YHWH, will keep him forever, Ps. 89:28
16. YHWH’s covenant will confirm him, Ps. 89:28 (cf. Ps. 89:3,34)
17. his descendants will be established and reign forever, Ps. 89:29 (cf. Ps. 89:4; 2 Samuel 7)

89:19 “Once You spoke in visions” This refers to Nathan speaking to David in 2 Sam. 7:14-17.

▣ **“I have given help”** The VERB (BDB 1001, KB 1438, *Piel* PERFECT) means to set or to place.

The word “half” (עֶזֶר, BDB 740 I) is understood by some translators as

1. “diadem” – Godspeed
2. “crown” – NRSV, NAB

The term “crown” would involve an emendation to the MT, by changing the first letter, i.e., עֶזֶר, BDB 634, cf. Exod. 29:6; 39:30; Lev. 8:9; 21:12; 2 Sam. 1:10; 2 Kgs. 11:12; Ps. 89:39; 132:18; Pro. 27:24; Zech. 9:16.

The UBS Text Project gives “help” an A rating (very high probability, p. 354).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 89:30-37

³⁰“If his sons forsake My law

And do not walk in My judgments,

³¹If they violate My statutes

And do not keep My commandments,

³²Then I will punish their transgression with the rod

And their iniquity with stripes.

³³But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him,

Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness.

³⁴My covenant I will not violate,

Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.

³⁵Once I have sworn by My holiness;

I will not lie to David.

³⁶His descendants shall endure forever

And his throne as the sun before Me.

³⁷It shall be established forever like the moon,

And the witness in the sky is faithful.”

Selah.

89:30-37 This strophe is the shocking contrast to the wonderful plans and purposes of YHWH for His people (note “if” at Ps. 89:30 and 31).

1. they left His law, Ps. 89:30
2. they did not walk in His judgments, Ps. 89:30
3. they profaned His statutes, Ps. 89:31
4. they did not keep His commandments, Ps. 89:31

Yet YHWH makes a series of statements about what He will and will not do, even in light of Israel's failure to be faithful. He is faithful!

1. I will punish them for their sin, Ps. 89:32
2. but I will not break off My lovingkindness, Ps. 89:33
3. but I will not deal falsely because of My faithfulness, Ps. 89:33
4. I will not violate My own covenant, Ps. 89:34
5. I will not alter My words, Ps. 89:34
6. once I have sworn, I will not lie to David, Ps. 89:35
 - a. his descendants (lit. "seed") will endure forever, Ps. 89:36
 - b. his throne is as secure as the sun, moon, sky, Ps. 89:36b-37 (for the secure order of creation see Jer. 31:35-37)

This illustrates the tension between conditional and unconditional promises. I have discussed this issue in two places.

1. See Special Topic: Covenant
2. Crucial Intro. to Revelation, see Special Topic: OT Predictions of the Future vs. NT Predictions, especially the "third tension"

This same tension between a conditional and unconditional promise is illustrated by the contrast between Isaiah's emphatic statements that Jerusalem would never fall (Isaiah 37) and Jeremiah's insistence that it will fall because of Judah's idolatry and covenant disobedience.

The best guess at the historical crisis that elicited this Psalm is the exile of the Davidic King, either by Pharaoh Necho II or Nebuchadnezzar II. This is only a guess; the Psalm itself does not clearly indicate the historical setting. Some kind of divine judgment has affected the Davidic king.

89:30-31 "law. . .judgments. . .statutes. . .commandments" These are all parallel terms for YHWH's revelation in Scripture. See Special Topic: Terms For God's Revelation.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 89:38-45

- ³⁸**But You have cast off and rejected,
You have been full of wrath against Your anointed.**
- ³⁹**You have spurned the covenant of Your servant;
You have profaned his crown in the dust.**
- ⁴⁰**You have broken down all his walls;
You have brought his strongholds to ruin.**
- ⁴¹**All who pass along the way plunder him;
He has become a reproach to his neighbors.**
- ⁴²**You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries;
You have made all his enemies rejoice.**
- ⁴³**You also turn back the edge of his sword
And have not made him stand in battle.**
- ⁴⁴**You have made his splendor to cease
And cast his throne to the ground.**

⁴⁵You have shortened the days of his youth;

You have covered him with shame.

Selah.

89:38-45 In light of YHWH's statements about His faithfulness to the covenants (esp. Abraham and David) He has judged His people for their sin (cf. Ps. 89:32). This judgment was severe and seemingly unexplainable to Israel (series of PERFECTS).

1. He cast off His anointed
2. He rejected (rare word, BDB 611, KB 658, cf. Lam. 2:7) His anointed
3. He is full of wrath for His anointed
4. He spurned the covenant of His servant
5. He profaned his crown
6. He broke down the walls (of Jerusalem)
7. He brought his stronghold to ruin
8. He allowed foreigners to plunder him
9. He allowed him to become a reproach to his neighbors
10. He exalted the power of his enemies
11. He made his enemies rejoice
12. He allowed him to be defeated
13. He allowed his splendor to cease (see note below)
14. He cast his throne to the ground
15. He shortened his life (cf. Ps. 102:23)
16. He covered him in shame

Wow! What a judgment! Thank God for Ps. 89:33-37. Thank God for the NT, the gospel, the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus!

89:44

NASB, JPSOA

REB

“splendor”

NKJV, Peshitta

“glory”

NRSV, TEV

NJB

“scepter from his hand”

LXX

“purification”

The term (טהרוּם, BDB 372, UBS “A” rating) appears only here in the OT. The MASCULINE NOUN'S basic meaning is “clearness” or “luster,” which comes from the VERB. The UBS Text Project (p. 356) suggests that NASB or LXX be followed. The emendation (טהַם) of NRSV fits the parallelism of Ps. 89:44b better.

89:41-48 This strophe asks the questions that have been repeated often in Psalms: “How long?” (cf. Ps. 6:3; 13:1; 74:10; 79:5; 80:4; 90:13; 94:3).

The unique aspect of this strophe is not the questions but the reasons given for YHWH to act (Ps. 89:47-51).

1. remember (*Qal* IMPERATIVE) the frailty of human existence, Ps. 89:47-48
2. remember (*Qal* IMPERATIVE) Your lovingkindness and faithful oaths to David
3. remember the reproach of Your people among the nations
4. remember that Your anointed has been reproached

There is a larger redemptive plan involving Israel and her Messiah. See Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 89:46-48

⁴⁶**How long, O LORD?**

Will You hide Yourself forever?

Will Your wrath burn like fire?

⁴⁷**Remember what my span of life is;**

For what vanity You have created all the sons of men!

⁴⁸**What man can live and not see death?**

Can he deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah.

89:46 “fire” See Special Topic: Fire.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 89:49-51

⁴⁹**Where are Your former lovingkindnesses, O Lord,**

Which You swore to David in Your faithfulness?

⁵⁰**Remember, O Lord, the reproach of Your servants;**

How I bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the many peoples,

⁵¹**With which Your enemies have reproached, O LORD,**

With which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed.

89:49 “O Lord” This is the term *Adon* (i.e., Lord, owner, master). Notice it reappears in Ps. 89:50, but is YHWH in Ps. 89:51. The covenant name for God dominates this Psalm (5 times).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 89:52

⁵²**Blessed be the LORD forever!**

Amen and Amen.

89:52 God will work it out! He will be both just and merciful. He will be true to His word!

This phrase is not part of Psalm 89 but the closing doxology of Book III of the Psalter (i.e., the other books also close with doxologies, Ps. 4:14; 72:18-19; 106:48).

▣ **“Amen”** See Special Topic: Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Read this Psalm as a whole; what is the subject of the Psalm?
2. Explain the difference between an unconditional covenant and a conditional covenant.
3. Define “lovingkindness” and “faithfulness.”
4. How is this Psalm related to 2 Samuel 7?
5. Does the OT use Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Canaanite mythology? If so, why?
6. How is the Israeli king a son of God?
7. Does this Psalm have a Messianic aspect? If so, how?

PSALM 90

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Eternity and Man's Transitoriness <u>MT Intro</u> A Prayer of Moses the man of God	The Eternity of God, and Man's Frailty	Prayer for Deliverance From National Adversity	Of God and Human Beings	On Human Frailty
90:1-2	90:1-2	90:1-2	90:1-2	90:1 90:2
90:3-6	90:3-6	90:3-6	90:3-6	90:3-4 90:5-6
90:7-12	90:7-12	90:7-10 90:11-12	90:7-8 90:9-10 90:11-12	90:7-8 90:9-10 90:11 90:12-13
90:13-17	90:13-17	90:13-17	90:13-17	90:14-15 90:16-17

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm proclaims YHWH's eternity (i.e., Ps. 90:1-2, 4) and mankind's transitoriness (i.e., Ps. 90:3, 5-6, 9-10).
- B. Israel's sins (i.e., Ps. 90:8) caused YHWH to bring judgment to His people (i.e., Ps. 90:7,9,11). They pray for His mercy to return (i.e., Ps. 90:12, 13-17).
- C. This Psalm has several words used in doubles.
1. turn back, return – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT and then *Qal* IMPERATIVE, Ps. 90:3
 2. be glad. . . make us glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* COHORTATIVE and then *Piel* IMPERATIVE
 3. seen. . . appear – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* PERFECT, then *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 4. confirm. . . confirm – BDB 465, KB 464, both *Polel* IMPERATIVES
- D. Surprisingly the MT introductory note has Moses as the author. These notes do not appear in the Dead Sea Scrolls but they do appear in the Septuagint. They are ancient Jewish traditions but not originally part of the inspired text. Possible reasons this Psalm is identified with Moses are
1. obvious allusion to Gen. 3:19 (i.e., different words for dust but same concept)
 2. possible allusion between
 - a. Ps. 90:2, “birthing” and Deut. 32:6,18
 - b. Ps. 90:2, the eternity of God and Deut. 32:40
 - c. Ps. 90:13b, pity and Deut. 32:36
 3. In Book IV of Psalms, Moses' name appears several times (cf. Ps. 99:6; 103:7; 105:26; 106:16,23,32) and only once in the first three Books (i.e., Ps. 77:20).
In the whole of the fourth division of the Psalter (Psalm 90-106) only three Psalms have the traditional author given.
 - a. Psalm 90, Moses
 - b-c. the Psalms of 103 and 104 are attributed to DavidThe LXX attributes all but Psalm 90 to David.
- E. This Psalm has several words (and phrases) denoting time.
1. in all generations, Ps. 90:1
 2. from everlasting to everlasting, Ps. 90:2
 3. a thousand years, Ps. 90:4
 4. yesterday, Ps. 90:4
 5. a watch in the night, Ps. 90:4
 6. in the morning, Ps. 90:5,6,14
 7. towards evening, Ps. 90:6
 8. all our days, Ps. 90:9,14
 9. our years like a sigh, Ps. 90:9
 10. the days of our lives, Ps. 90:10
 11. seventy years, Ps. 90:10
 12. eighty years, Ps. 90:10
 13. number our days, Ps. 90:12
 14. how long will it be, Ps. 90:13

15. according to the days, Ps. 90:15
16. years we have seen evil, Ps. 90:15

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 90:1-2

¹**Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

²**Before the mountains were born**

Or You gave birth to the earth and the world,

Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

90:1-2 This strophe introduces three theological truths.

1. Israel is and was YHWH's special people (i.e., since the call of Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3).
2. YHWH is the eternal God, no beginning, no end (cf. Ps. 9:7; 29:10; Isa. 41:4; 43:10; 44:6; 48:12; Jude v. 25; Rev. 1:8,17; 21:6; 22:13; see Special Topic: Monotheism).
3. YHWH is the creator of the physical world for His own purposes (see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan).

90:1 “Lord” The NASB 1970 edition had “LORD” (i.e., YHWH) but the MT has *Adon* (cf. Ps. 90:17). The NASB 1995 edition corrects this. The NKJV, TEV, and REB also have LORD (YHWH), which is found in Ps. 90:13.



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “dwelling place”

TEV “home”

NJB, JPSOA,

REB, LXX “refuge”

The MT has “dwelling places” (מִעוֹן, BDB 732 I, cf. Ps. 71:3). The NASB margin mentions “place of refuge” (מִעוֹן, BDB 731, cf. Ps. 27:1; 37:40) as an ancient option. Both concepts are mentioned together in Ps. 91:9 in parallel.

90:2 The first two poetic lines personify physical creation in terms of human birth metaphors.

1. born, cf. Job 15:7; Pro. 8:25
2. give birth, literally “writhe in the pain of child birth,” BDB 297, *Polel* #2; it is used of YHWH birthing Israel in Deut. 32:6,18

▣ **“earth. . .world”** These are parallel and have no intended distinction (cf. Ps. 19:4; 24:1; 33:8; 77:18). I do not think the second word stands for the universe. The Bible is about this planet. For the first word, see Special Topic: Land, Country, Earth.

▣ **“from everlasting to everlasting”** This is one of several idiomatic phrases that express the eternity of YHWH. His name, YHWH, means “the ever-living, only-living One, cf. Exod. 3:14).

For “everlasting” (BDB 761) see the Special Topic: Forever (‘*olam*).

I am often asked where God came from. The Bible does not address this question but begins with God's existence and activity in Gen. 1:1. Our curiosity must wait! Be careful of speculation in the absence of revelation!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 90:3-6

³You turn man back into dust

And say, “Return, O children of men.”

⁴For a thousand years in Your sight

Are like yesterday when it passes by,

Or *as* a watch in the night.

⁵You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep;

In the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew.

⁶In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew;

Toward evening it fades and withers away.

90:3-6 As the first strophe emphasizes YHWH’s eternality, this strophe asserts mankind’s transitoriness and frailty. This is highlighted in the third strophe (Ps. 90:7-12) by the reality of YHWH’s judgment on Israel. Even the special people of God reap the consequences of sin!

90:3 This verse makes a reality statement (i.e., humans die, cf. Gen. 2:7; 3:14,16) and parallels it with the same word (BDB 996, KB 1427) in an IMPERATIVE statement. Human death was not the will of God or the natural cycle of His planet but the direct result of human sin! See Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed., pp. 1176-1177.

This current world was not the original intent of YHWH but the result of Genesis 3.

▣ **“O children of men”** Because of the obvious allusion to Genesis, this could be “children of Adam” (NJB, cf. Ps. 8:4).

90:4 This is idiomatic language for YHWH’s eternity (cf. 2 Pet. 3:8). This shows that time indicators can function as figurative idioms (i.e., “day” of Genesis 1, see Special Topic: Day (*yom*)). Time is not a limiting factor to Deity as it is to humanity!

For “thousand” see Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Thousand (*elep*)

▣ **“watch in the night”** In the OT the night was divided into three watches (i.e., military way of dividing the length of time soldiers stood guard). By the NT the Jews of Palestine had adopted the Roman division of four night watches.

1. OT – Exod. 14:24; Jdgs. 7:19; 1 Sam. 11:11; Lam. 2:19
2. NT – Matt. 14:35; Mark 13:35

90:5 “like a flood” Raging water was often used metaphorically of human troubles. However, here the word may be the single usage of a word meaning, “put an end to life” (KB 281 I; NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 1150), following an Arabic root and not related to the Hebrew root, “pour out” (BDB 281, KB 281 II).

▣ **“asleep”** Sleep (BDB 446) is an OT idiom for death. The first occurrences relate to leaders being gathered to their families (i.e., Deut. 31:16). It came to be an idiom for all who die (i.e., Ps. 13:3; Dan. 12:2; Isa. 26:19). This idiom does not imply an unconscious state between death and resurrection.

▣ **“Like grass”** This is a recurrent metaphor for mankind (cf. Job 14:2; Ps. 102:11; 103:15; Isa. 40:6; 1 Pet. 1:24,25). As seasonal plants appear in spring and disappear in winter, so too, mankind’s brief life span!

In some texts it refers to the destruction of the wicked (cf. Job 18:16; Ps. 37:2). Seasonal grass will reappear (i.e., there is hope for faithful followers), but the wicked are gone forever.

It is contextually possible that this Psalm is referring to premature death (i.e., esp. Ps. 90:10d).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 90:7-12

⁷**For we have been consumed by Your anger
And by Your wrath we have been dismayed.**

⁸**You have placed our iniquities before You,
Our secret *sins* in the light of Your presence.**

⁹**For all our days have declined in Your fury;
We have finished our years like a sigh.**

¹⁰**As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years,
Or if due to strength, eighty years,
Yet their pride is *but* labor and sorrow;
For soon it is gone and we fly away.**

¹¹**Who understands the power of Your anger
And Your fury, according to the fear that is due You?**

¹²**So teach us to number our days,
That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.**

90:7-12 This strophe clearly admits that YHWH’s judgment on His people is the direct result of their sin. However, His people trust and hope in the basic character of God—mercy! To me, Ps. 103:8-14 is a sure hope in the character of God (cf. Exod. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 145:8).

90:7 “anger” Notice the variety of words used to describe YHWH’s reaction to covenant disobedience.

1. anger, Ps. 90:7a,11 – BDB 60 I
2. wrath, Ps. 90:7b – BDB 404
3. fury, Ps. 90:9,11 – BDB 720

Remember, the Bible uses human vocabulary to describe God. It is always metaphorical and limited. See Special Topic: God Described as Human. Psalm 103 helps me balance His anger and love! Jesus is the ultimate expression of His character and promises!



NASB, NJB “dismayed”

NKJV, TEV “terrified”

NRSV “overwhelmed”

JPSOA “terror-struck”

This VERB (BDB 96, KB 111, *Niphal* PERFECT) denotes the fear of death and judgment (cf. Ps. 30:7; 104:29; NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 610-611). Sin has temporal and eschatological consequences!

90:8 “the light of Your presence” Light is a biblical symbol of goodness, revelation, health. God is light (cf. 1 Tim. 6:16; James 1:17; 1 John 1:5). His personal presence is expressed by the idiom of the light of His countenance (cf. Ps. 4:6; 31:16; 44:3; 67:1; 80:3,7,19; 89:15; 104:2; 119:135).

90:11 “according to the fear that is due You” The word “fear” (BDB 432) can be misunderstood. It denotes respect, reverence, piety (see Special Topic: Fear). The frail and transitory acknowledge the eternal, Holy One! Notice how Proverbs uses this concept (cf. Pro. 10:27; 14:26-27; 15:16; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17).

90:12 Once we realize our frailty and His permanence, then and only then, can we live a life of joy, peace, and trust. Our hope is completely in Him. Our service to Him brings meaning to life!

1. teach us – BDB 393, KB 390, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. that we may present – BDB 97, KB 112, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

▣ **“heart”** See Special Topic: Heart.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 90:13-17

- ¹³Do return, O Lord; how long *will it be?*
And be sorry for Your servants.**
- ¹⁴O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness,
That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.**
- ¹⁵Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us,
And the years we have seen evil.**
- ¹⁶Let Your work appear to Your servants
And Your majesty to their children.**
- ¹⁷Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us;
And confirm for us the work of our hands;
Yes, confirm the work of our hands.**

90:13-17 This final strophe is full of repentant prayer requests based on YHWH’s character.

1. return, Ps. 90:13 – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 90:3 – we return to dust, He returns to mercy!
2. be sorry for, Ps. 90:13 – BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
3. satisfy us, Ps. 90:14 – BDB 959, KB 1302, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
 - a. that we may sing for joy – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
 - b. be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
4. make us glad, Ps. 90:15 – BDB 90, KB 1333, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
5. let Your work appear to Your servants, Ps. 90:16 – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
6. Your majesty to Your children, Ps. 90:16 – assumes the same VERB as #5
7. let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, Ps. 90:17 – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE
8. confirm for us the work of our hands, Ps. 90:17 – BDB 465, KB 464, *Polel* IMPERATIVE
9. #8 is repeated

Notice how many VERBS in this strophe begin with *w*

1. return, Ps. 90:13 – BDB 996
2. satisfy, Ps. 90:14 – BDB 959
3. sing for joy, Ps. 90:14 – BDB 943
4. be glad, Ps. 90:14 – BDB 970
5. make us glad, Ps. 90:15 – BDB 970
6. we have seen, Ps. 90:15 – BDB 906
7. be manifest, Ps. 90:16 – BDB 906

90:13 “how long *will it be?*” This is a recurrent question (cf. Ps. 6:8; 13:1; 74:10). Believers experiencing the pains and problems of this life cry out to God!

Be sure that revelation, not circumstances, define your worldview and trust in God. Circumstances come and go but God remains!

90:14 “lovingkindness” See Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*).

90:15 This verse is a prayer request that the years of future blessing will match the years of past afflictions.

Notice the psalmist recognizes that Israel’s problems are God-sent because of her sins (i.e., Ps. 31:10; 39:11)!

90:16-17 Notice that Ps. 90:16 focuses on YHWH’s works and Ps. 90:17 on the faithful followers’ works. YHWH’s deliverance allows His people to prosper from generation to generation. Sin destroys everything!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why do the ancient Jewish traditions assert Mosaic authorship of this Psalm?
2. List the ways the Psalm is alluding to Genesis 3.
3. In one sentence state the central truth of this Psalm.
4. Is Ps. 90:10 speaking of death at the end of a long life or premature death?
5. List the prayer requests of Ps. 90:13-17.

PSALM 91

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Security for the One who Trusts in the LORD <u>No MT Intro</u>	Safety of Abiding in the Presence of God	Meditation on God as the Protector of the Faithful	God Our Protector	Under God's Protection
91:1-4	91:1-2 91:3-6	91:1-6	91:1-6	91:1-2 91:3-4
91:5-10	91:7-8 91:9-10	91:7-8 91:9-10	91:7-8 91:9-13	91:5-6 91:7-9 91:10-11
91:11-13	91:11-13	91:11-13		91:12-13
91:14-16	91:14-16	91:14-16	91:14-16	91:14-16

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. Introduction

1. This is a wonderful Psalm describing God's protection of and presence with His faithful followers (cf. Psalm 16; 23; 62; 121).
2. Often the Psalms speak of the nation of Israel (cf. Psalm 90), but this one is individualized (SINGULAR "you").
3. The truths of Ps. 91:1-8 are paralleled by Ps. 91:9-13. God's care and provision are repeated for emphasis and then God Himself speaks in Ps. 91:14-16.

- B. Names of Deity used in Psalm 91 (see Special Topic: Names for Deity).
1. Most High (*Elyon*, BDB 751, KB 832), Ps. 91:1a – descriptive title most often used in poetry
 2. Almighty (*Shaddai*, BDB 994), Ps. 91:1b, 9b, used mostly in Genesis and Job; only twice in Psalms; 68:14 and here – patriarchal name for God (cf. Exod. 6:30; possibly from the Hebrew root “to be strong,” NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 401)
 3. LORD (YHWH, BDB 217), Ps. 91:2a, 9a – the covenant name for Deity, first used in Gen. 2:4; it is from the Hebrew VERB “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14); the rabbis say it describes Deity as Savior, Redeemer
 4. God (*Elyon*, BDB 43), Ps. 91:2b – this is the general name for Deity in the ANE, *El*; in Gen. 1:1, the PLURAL form, *Elohim* is used; the rabbis say this describes God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on earth
- C. This Psalm is dominated by IMPERFECTS (28), which denote continuing actions of our God on behalf of the faithful followers.
- The two PERFECTS of Ps. 91:14 denote the settled, intimate relationship between God and His faithful followers. The imagery is from married life (cf. Isa. 54:5; Hos. 2:19; Eph. 5:25).
1. “cleave” – cf. Gen. 2:24
 2. “know” – Gen. 4:1,17,25; 24:16; 38:26

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 91:1-4

¹He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
 Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
²I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress,
 My God, in whom I trust!”
³For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper
 And from the deadly pestilence.
⁴He will cover you with His pinions,
 And under His wings you may seek refuge;
 His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.

91:1-4 This strophe uses several names/titles for Deity (see Contextual Insights, B) and several metaphors to describe His care and protection.

1. shelter – Ps. 27:5; 31:20, which denotes the temple, cf. Ps. 27:5; 31:20; 32:7; 61:4
2. shadow – see Special Topic: Shadow as a Metaphor for Protection and Care
3. refuge – see note online at Ps. 5:11
4. fortress – Ps. 18:2; 31:3; 71:3; 144:2; Jer. 16:19

Psalm 91:4 alludes to #2, 3,4 above

The One in whom faithful followers trust (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERFECT; see note online at Ps. 4:5).

1. delivers them from the snare of the trapper (cf. Ps. 124:7)
2. delivers them from the deadly pestilence (cf. Ps. 91:6; possibly demonic, cf. Hab. 3:5 and Special Topic: The Demonic in the OT)
3. will cover them with His wings (cf. Ps. 36:7; 57:1; 63:7)

4. His faithfulness (see Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT) is
 - a. a shield (cf. Ps. 35:2)
 - b. a bulwark or (RSV) buckler (both military terms, this word [BDB 695, KB 750] is found only here in the OT; NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 243)

This is a beautiful and powerful strophe of Deity's character and actions on behalf of His people.

91:1 “shadow of the Almighty” This can refer to

1. the wings of the *cherubim* over the ark (i.e., covenant protection, cf. Exod. 25:17-22)
2. the wings of a protective mother bird (cf. Ps. 17:8; 36:7 57:1; 61:4; 53:7; 91:4; and Matt. 23:27)
3. protection from the burning heat of the sun (cf. Ps. 121:5; Isa. 25:4; 32:2)

91:2 “in whom I trust” This is the key to a covenant relationship with God (cf. Ps. 4:5; 25:2; 56:4).

91:3 “pestilence” The basic root is דבר (BDB 182-184), which has several usages.

1. word (cf. LXX of Ps. 91:3)
2. speaking (cf. Jer. 5:13)
3. pestilence (cf. Exod. 5:3; 9:15; Num. 14:12; Lev. 26:25; Deut. 28:21; Ps. 78:50)
4. pasture (cf. Micah 2:12)
5. bee or bee sting (NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 916)

Because of Ps. 91:5-6 #3 fits the context and parallelism best.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 91:5-10

⁵**You will not be afraid of the terror by night,
Or of the arrow that flies by day;
⁶Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
Or of the destruction that lays waste at noon.
⁷A thousand may fall at your side
And ten thousand at your right hand,
But it shall not approach you.
⁸You will only look on with your eyes
And see the recompense of the wicked.
⁹For you have made the LORD, my refuge,
Even the Most High, your dwelling place.
¹⁰No evil will befall you,
Nor will any plague come near your tent.**

91:5-10 This strophe continues the imagery of Ps. 91:1-4, esp. “the deadly pestilence” of Ps. 91:3b, which is expanded in Ps. 91:5-6, 10, while the military imagery of Ps. 91:4c is expanded in Ps. 91:7-8.

91:5-6 These things were viewed by the rabbis as elements of the demonic (cf. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5, p. 1523). Notice (1) it walks, Ps. 91:6 and (2) the “it” of Ps. 91:7. See Special Topic: The Demonic in the OT.

91:7 This is a hyperbolic expression using military imagery of the believer's personal care, provided by his covenant God.

91:8 As God's people are subject to the attack of the wicked, they will also be an observer of their judgment (cf. Ps. 37:34; 54:7; 58:10).

▣ **“the recompense”** This form of the basic root (BDB 1024) is found only here in the OT. Similar forms are found in Deut. 32:35; Isa. 59:18 (twice).

91:9-10 This is parallel to Ps. 91:1-2, while Ps. 91:10 is parallel to Ps. 91:5-7.

91:9 This verse in Hebrew seems to first address God (i.e., O YHWH) in line a and then makes a statement directed to a faithful follower who made Him his dwelling place. There are several places this type of mixing of persons occurs. The UBS *Handbook* (p. 801) suggests that in

1. Ps. 91:1, a priest is speaking
2. Ps. 91:2, the worshiper
3. Ps. 91:3-8, a priest again
4. Ps. 91:9a, the worshiper
5. Ps. 91:9b, the priest again
6. Ps. 91:14-16, God speaks

This solves some of the person problems but raises other grammatical issues. The Hebrew language often changes persons, even gender, for no apparent reason.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 91:11-13

¹¹**For He will give His angels charge concerning you,**

To guard you in all your ways.

¹²**They will bear you up in their hands,**

That you do not strike your foot against a stone.

¹³**You will tread upon the lion and cobra,**

The young lion and the serpent you will trample down.

91:11-12 These verses are quoted by Satan in Jesus' temptation experience in the wilderness (cf. Matt. 4:6; Luke 4:10-11). The promise of God's care must not be proof texted into a presumptuous demand. Believers do suffer (cf. Job; Psalm 72 versus Deuteronomy 27-28; and Rom. 8:28-30 versus 8:31-39).

91:11 “His angels” This may be the OT background (note Exod. 23:20) to Matt. 18:10; Luke 4:10-11 (LXX) and Acts 12:15 of the concept of “guardian angels.” Also note, if you combine Heb. 1:14 with Ps. 103:21, there seems to be a connection.

▣ **“To guard you in all your ways”** This is a wonderful promise for those who trust in God and flee to His care. However, this is also a biblical hyperbole. We live in a fallen, evil world. Believers do face trials, sickness, temptation, etc. (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:1-3; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 6:3-10; 11:23-30; Phil. 1:29; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 3:14; 4:12-16; Rev. 11:7; 13:7).

91:13 This links the previous promises historically to the wilderness wandering period or it may be figurative language for the problems humans face in a fallen world (cf. Ps. 58:3-5; Luke 10:19).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 91:14-16

¹⁴“Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him;
I will set him *securely* on high, because he has known My name.
¹⁵He will call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.
¹⁶With a long life I will satisfy him
And let him see My salvation.”

91:14-16 God speaks and thereby sets up an “if. . .then” covenant blessing relationship (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30).

<u>God (then)</u>	<u>Believer (if)</u>	<u>God's Blessings</u>
1. deliver him	love (lit. “cleave to”) God (PERFECT)	be with him in time of trouble
2. set him on high	knows God's name (PERFECT)	rescue him
3. answer him	calls upon God (PERFECT)	honor him (cf. John 12:26 a. with long life b. behold God's salvation

91:14 “know” See Special Topic: Know.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Explain the OT images of shelter, shadow, refuge/fortress.
2. List and define the names for God.
3. Does Ps. 91:5-7 speak of the demonic, warfare, or sickness?
4. Why does Ps. 91:9-10 repeat the thoughts of Ps. 91:1-2?
5. How did the devil inappropriately use this Psalm in speaking to Jesus?
6. Does this Psalm promise that true believers will never have problems?
7. Explain the concept of “name” in relation to Ps. 91:14-15.

PSALM 92

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Praise for The LORD'S Goodness <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath day.	Praise to the LORD for His Love and Faithfulness	Thanksgiving After Deliverance From Personal Enemies	A Song of Praise	The Song of the Upright
92:1-4	92:1-4	92:1-4	92:1-4	92:1-3 92:4-6
92:5-9	92:5-7 92:8-9	92:5-9	92:5-8 92:9-11	92:7-8 92:9-11
92:10-15	92:10-11 92:12-15	92:10-11 92:12-15	92:12-15	92:12-13 92:14-15

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm uses agricultural growth words, as in Ps. 1:3, to describe one's spiritual life.
 1. negatively
 - a. the wicked sprout up like grass, Ps. 92:7
 - b. all who did iniquity flourished, Ps. 92:7
 2. positively
 - a. the righteous man will flourish, Ps. 92:12
 - b. he will grow, Ps. 92:12
 - c. planted in the house of the LORD, Ps. 92:13

- d. they will flourish in the courts of our God, Ps. 92:13
 - e. they will still yield fruit in old age, Ps. 92:14
 - f. they will be full of sap and very green, Ps. 92:14
- B. There is a recurrent use of words beginning with ע.
- 1. sprouted (lit. “bud”), Ps. 92:7 – BDB 827, KB 965
 - 2. did flourish, Ps. 92:7 – BDB 821, KB 950
 - 3. scattered (lit. “be divided”), Ps. 92:9 – BDB 825, KB 962
 - 4. all who do iniquity, Ps. 92:9 – BDB 821, KB 950
 - 5. flourish (lit. “bud”), Ps. 92:12 – BDB same as #1
 - 6. flourish (lit. “bud”) – same as #1
- C. There are no prayer requests (i.e., IMPERATIVES, JUSSIVES, COHORTATIVES), just statements to the works of God.
- 1. His character, Ps. 92:2,15
 - 2. His works
 - a. creation, Ps. 92:5
 - b. justice, Ps. 92:6-9
 - c. blessings, Ps. 92:10-14

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 92:1-4

¹It is good to give thanks to the LORD
 And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;
²To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning
 And Your faithfulness by night,
³With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp,
 With resounding music upon the lyre.
⁴For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done,
 I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands.

92:1-4 This strophe emphasizes praise. Notice the recurrent references to music.

- 1. VERBS
 - a. give thanks, Ps. 92:1 – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
 - b. sing praises, Ps. 92:1 – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
 - c. make glad, Ps. 92:4 – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Piel* PERFECT
 - d. sing for joy, Ps. 92:4 – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* IMPERFECT
- 2. musical instruments (a. may define b. and, therefore, refer to only two instruments, cf. Ps. 33:2; 144:9)
 - a. ten-stringed lute, Ps. 92:3 – BDB 797
 - b. harp, Ps. 92:3 – BDB 614 II
 - c. lyre, Ps. 92:3 – BDB 490 (b. and c. are both mentioned in Ps. 57:8)

92:1 “Most High” See note at Psalm 91:1.

92:2 This Psalm begins with three INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS.

1. give thanks
2. sing praises
3. declare – BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil*

Notice that number 3, “declare,” also closes (*inclusio*) the Psalm at Ps. 92:15. The declaration involves

1. YHWH’s lovingkindness, Ps. 92:2 (see Special Topic: Lovingkindness [*hesed*])
2. YHWH’s faithfulness, Ps. 92:2 (cf. Ps. 33:4; 143:1, see Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT)
3. YHWH’s uprightness, Ps. 92:15 (see Special Topic: Righteousness)
4. YHWH’s stability and strength (lit. “He is my rock”), Ps. 92:15
5. YHWH’s perfect character (lit. “there is no unrighteousness in Him,” cf. Rom. 9:11; James 1:17), Ps. 92:15

▣ **“morning . . . night”** These are parallel and are idiomatic for “always.” The other option is that they reflect the times of the daily sacrifice (i.e., 9 A.M., 3 P.M. in the temple and, therefore, have a liturgical emphasis).

92:4 “what You have done” The two poetic lines of Ps. 92:4 repeat this thought (i.e., Psalm 1, i.e., “The Two Ways,” cf. Deut. 30:15,19). YHWH’s work is

1. the destruction of the wicked, Ps. 92:5-9 (esp. Ps. 92:5a)
2. the blessing of the righteous, Ps. 92:10-15

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 92:5-9

⁵How great are Your works, O LORD!

Your thoughts are very deep.

⁶A senseless man has no knowledge,

Nor does a stupid man understand this:

⁷That when the wicked sprouted up like grass

And all who did iniquity flourished,

It *was only* that they might be destroyed forevermore.

⁸But You, O LORD, are on high forever.

⁹For, behold, Your enemies, O LORD,

For, behold, Your enemies will perish;

All who do iniquity will be scattered.

92:5-9 This strophe focuses on YHWH’s activity toward

1. a senseless man, Ps. 92:6a – BDB 35 CONSTRUCT BDB 129
2. a stupid man, Ps. 92:6b – BDB 493, both #1 and #2 are used in Ps. 49:10; 94:8
3. the wicked, Ps. 92:7a – BDB 957
4. he who does iniquity, Ps. 92:7b
5. YHWH’s enemies, Ps. 92:9 (twice) – BDB 33, *Qal* PARTICIPLE

They are characterized as

1. having no knowledge
2. flourishing in this fallen world
3. ultimately and permanently being destroyed (this is what the senseless and stupid do not understand)

YHWH is characterized as

1. having great works
2. deep thoughts (*Qal* of BDB 770 only here)
3. on high forever
4. Ps. 92:15 is the praise due YHWH's faithful acts toward His faithful followers

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 92:10-15

¹⁰**But You have exalted my horn like *that* of the wild ox;**

I have been anointed with fresh oil.

¹¹**And my eye has looked *exultantly* upon my foes,**

My ears hear of the evildoers who rise up against me.

¹²**The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree,**

He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

¹³**Planted in the house of the LORD,**

They will flourish in the courts of our God.

¹⁴**They will still yield fruit in old age;**

They shall be full of sap and very green,

¹⁵**To declare that the LORD is upright;**

He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

92:10-15 This strophe focuses on YHWH's activities toward the righteous man (Ps. 92:12). Note His activities on their behalf.

1. exalted his horn
2. anointed with fresh oil
3. would flourish like the palm
4. would grow like the cedar
5. planted in YHWH's temple (cf. Ps. 52:8)
6. would flourish in YHWH's courts (cf. Ps. 65:4; 84:10; 135:2)
7. would yield fruit in old age
8. full of sap and very green
9. know YHWH is his rock and He is perfectly just

The rabbis interpreted this strophe as referring to an eschatological setting. This may be right (cf. Ps. 92:7c).

92:10 "the wild ox" The LXX translated the Hebrew term BDB 910, אֶבֶר, as "unicorn," which was followed by the King James Version. NKJV changes it to "wild ox."

This word is uncertain (KB 1163).

1. wild bull (Akkadian root)
2. wild buffalo
3. white antelope (Arabic root)
4. oryx (Targums)
5. rhinoceros (Vulgate)



NASB, NKJV

"I have been anointed"

NRSV

"you have poured over me"

TEV

"you have blessed me"

NJB	“you anoint me”
JPSOA	“I am soaked”
LXX	“my old age”
Peshitta	“I will be anointed”

The VERB (BDB 117, KB 134, *Qal* PERFECT) usually means “to mix” or “to confuse”; only here does it denote an anointing. This meaning possibly comes from an Arabic root, “to moisten.” The UBS Text Project (p. 363) gives “I am moistened” a “B” (some doubt) rating.

92:11 If this Psalm reflects the praise of a King of Israel (LXX says David and “anointed,” cf. Ps. 91:10b), then this verse may refer to a plot to overthrow the monarchy, which was discovered.

92:13 “planted” This VERB (BDB 1060, KB 1570, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) means “transplanted” and the PASSIVE implies, by God (cf. Ps. 1:3; Jer. 17:8; Ezek. 17:10,22; 19:10,13; Hos. 9:13). Faithful followers start out as unfaithful but the gracious God has an effect on them!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Define the major theological theme describing YHWH’s character in Ps. 92:2.
 - a. lovingkindness
 - b. faithfulness
2. Are there two or three musical instruments listed in Ps. 92:3?
3. What are the “work(s)” of YHWH’s hands mentioned in Ps. 92:4b and 5a?
4. How do Ps. 92:7 and 8 relate theologically?
5. What does Ps. 92:11 relate to?
6. How does Ps. 92: 12-14 relate to Psalm 1?

PSALM 93

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Majesty of the LORD <u>No MT Intro</u>	The Eternal Reign of the LORD	Hymn Extolling God as King	God the King	The Majesty of God
93:1-2	93:1-2	93:1-2	93:1-2	93:1 93:2
93:3-5	93:3-4 93:5	93:3-4 93:5	93:3-4 93:5	93:3 93:4 93:5

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 93:1-2

¹The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;
The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength;
Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.
²Your throne is established from of old;
You are from everlasting.

93:1-2 This strophe describes YHWH as the reigning King of creation (cf. Ps. 47:2; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1). The first four VERBS of Ps. 93:1 are PERFECTS.

1. reigns – BDB 573, KB 590, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 96:10
2. clothed – BDB 527, KB 519, *Qal* PERFECT (twice)

3. girded Himself – BDB 25, KB 25, *Hithpael* PERFECT, note He girded Himself, which denotes the sovereignty of YHWH

It seems surprising that the next two VERBS of Ps. 93:1, which speak of His world being firmly established (cf. 93:2, a *Niphal*; Ps. 96:10) and that it will not be moved, are both IMPERFECTS, which denote an ongoing action (cf. 1 Chr. 16:30). In this context the PERFECTS may denote past time and the IMPERFECTS current/future time, but limited to this age.

93:1 Notice that these PERFECT VERBS speak of YHWH's kingly dress. His dress is a metaphorical way of asserting His character and power.

1. clothed with majesty (BDB 145)
2. clothed with strength (BDB 738)

Psalm 104:1 asserts He is clothed with “splendor” (BDB 217) and “majesty” (BDB 214). Psalm 6:5-6 asserts He is girded with “might” (BDB 150).

93:2 The eternal reign of the eternal YHWH (cf. Ps. 93:5c; 45:6; 90:2) is secure (cf. Ps. 10:16; 29:10; 46:10; 52:7)! Circumstances may seem to be supreme but they are only temporary. Our God reigns (cf. Dan. 2:44; 7:14,27; Luke 1:33; Rev. 11:15,17; 19:6)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 93:3-5

³**The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
The floods have lifted up their voice,
The floods lift up their pounding waves.**
⁴**More than the sounds of many waters,
Than the mighty breakers of the sea,
The LORD on high is mighty.**
⁵**Your testimonies are fully confirmed;
Holiness befits Your house,
O LORD, forevermore.**

93:3-4 The NASB divides this Psalm into two strophes, 93:1-2 and 93:3-5, but all the other English translations I use to compare strophe divisions (NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB), have Ps. 93:5 as a separate concluding statement.

Psalm 93:3-4 speaks of YHWH's creation and control of watery chaos (cf. Ps. 74:12-17; 89:9-10; Isa. 51:9). As Ps. 93:1 had a contrast between PERFECTS and IMPERFECTS denoting past and current/future acts of this age (cf. Zech. 14:9), so too, Ps. 93:3. There is no VERB in 93:4, but it also reflects YHWH as the eternal, victorious King of the universe!

93:3 The VERB (BDB 669, KB 724) is used three times, once in each line of poetry. This verse may reflect a poetic line used of *Ba'al* found in the Ras Shamra texts (i.e., Ugaritic). The Hebrew language often took the religious imagery of their neighbors/captors and applied it to YHWH, the only true God!

93:4 “mightier” The ADJECTIVE (BDB 12) is used to describe the raging of the waves (i.e., enemies of God at creation and through time, such as Egypt, Babylon) but YHWH is higher, greater, more powerful than all the enemies (initial, temporal, and eschatological)!

93:5 “testimonies” This term (BDB 730 III) reflects YHWH’s revelation. See Special Topic: Terms For God’s Revelation. YHWH

1. has established Himself as King forever
2. is victorious over watery chaos
3. has fully revealed Himself (see Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God) and His purposes (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan)

▣ **“Holiness befits Your house”** For “holiness” see Special Topic: Glory. The AB, vol. 17, by Mitchell Dahood (also see NIDOTTE, vol. 3, #2, p. 2) takes “holy” as a title for the angels of the heavenly council (cf. Ps. 29:1), thus making the line read

“In your temple the holy ones will laud you” (pp. 339, 343).

▣ The VERB “befits” can be analyzed in two ways.

1. a VERB – BDB 610, KB 659, *Pilel* PERFECT (*OT Parsing Guide* by Beall, Banks and Smith, p. 449)
 2. an ADVERB – BDB 610 (*Analytical Key to the OT*, by Owens, p. 425)
- “House” refers to the Tabernacle of the wilderness and later the temple in Jerusalem.

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1. Does this Psalm refer to initial creation or the exodus?
2. How is the Psalm related to the ANE themes of
 - a. watery chaos
 - b. God as Divine Warrior
3. To what does “testimonies” refer?

PSALM 94

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD Implored to Avenge His People <u>No MT Intro</u>	God the Refuge of the Righteous	A Prayer for Deliverance From Evil People	God the Judge of All	The God of Justice
94:1-7	94:1-3	94:1-3	94:1-4	94:1-2 94:3-4
	94:4-7	94:4-7	94:5-7	94:5-6 94:7-8
94:8-11	94:8-11	94:8-11	94:8-11	94:9-11
94:12-16	94:12-15	94:12-15	94:12-15	94:12-13 94:14-15
	94:16-19	94:16-23	94:16-19	94:16-17
94:17-23				94:18-19
	94:20-23		94:20-23	94:20-21 94:22-23

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Notice the number of VOCATIVES that NASB has.
1. O LORD (YHWH), Ps. 94:1,3,5,18
 2. God (*El*) of vengeance (BDB 608), Ps. 94:1 (twice)
 3. O LORD (*Yah*), Ps. 94:12 (cf. 94:7)
- B. Notice the ways YHWH is characterized by name/titles/phrases.
1. God of vengeance, Ps. 94:1
 2. Judge of the earth, Ps. 94:2
 3. God of Jacob, Ps. 94:7
 4. LORD, a stronghold, Ps. 94:22
 5. God the rock, Ps. 94:22
 6. LORD our *Elohim*, Ps. 94:23
- C. This Psalm cries out for the justice of the covenant God to manifest itself in this world. Evil and wickedness currently prevail but in His own time, God will vindicate (i.e., hold court) the righteous. This Psalm reminds me of Jesus' parable in Matt. 13:24-30. In time, at the right time, God will act so as to bless and receive the righteous but judge and reject the false followers. In both the OT and NT not all apparent followers are faithful followers. There are fakes (cf. Matt. 7:15-27). See Special Topic: Apostasy.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 94:1-7

- ¹O LORD, God of vengeance,
God of vengeance, shine forth!
- ²Rise up, O Judge of the earth,
Render recompense to the proud.
- ³How long shall the wicked, O LORD,
How long shall the wicked exult?
- ⁴They pour forth *words*, they speak arrogantly;
All who do wickedness vaunt themselves.
- ⁵They crush Your people, O LORD,
And afflict Your heritage.
- ⁶They slay the widow and the stranger
And murder the orphans.
- ⁷They have said, "The LORD does not see,
Nor does the God of Jacob pay heed."

94:1-7 This strophe expresses the frustration of a faithful follower when he/she sees the godlessness of those who claim to know God (i.e., other covenant partners, apparently the rich and powerful). They live and act as if there were no God of justice (i.e., practical atheists).

Notice

1. they are proud, Ps. 94:2b

2. they exult, Ps. 94:3b
3. they speak (lit. “pour out,” cf. Ps. 59:7; Pro. 15:2) arrogantly, Ps. 94:4a (cf. Ps. 31:18; 75:5)
4. they vaunt themselves, Ps. 94: 4b, cf. Ps. 10:3; 52:1
5. they crush God’s faithful followers, Ps. 94:5a (i.e., used of corrupt courts in Job 5:4; 22:9; Ps. 10:18; 72:4; 74:21; Pro. 22:22; Isa. 3:15)
6. they afflict God’s heritage, Ps. 94:5b, cf. 94:14
7. they kill (may be literal or figurative of loss of legal rights)
 - a. the widow
 - b. the alien/stranger
 - c. the orphan (cf. Exod. 22:21-24; Deut. 10:18; 14:29; 26:12-15)
8. they assert that God does not see or care about their actions, Ps. 94:7 (cf. Ps. 10:11; 59:7; 64:5; 73:11; Job 22:13; Isa. 29:15; 47:10; Ezek. 8:12; Mal. 2:17)

94:1-2 There are three prayer requests (IMPERATIVES) beseeching God to act.

1. shine forth – BDB 422, KB 424, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 80:1,3,7; it is used in the “Blessing of Moses” in Deut. 33:2
2. rise up – BDB 669, KB 724, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE; see notes at Ps. 3:7 and 7:6
3. render recompense (lit. “bring back”) – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Deut. 32:41,43; Isa. 66:15

94:1 “vengeance” This FEMININE term (BDB 668) is PLURAL. The NASB margin translates it as “avenging acts.” The MASCULINE form appears in Deut. 32:35,41. Vengeance is what YHWH does when His covenant is violated. Sometimes it relates to His own people (cf. esp. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-32; Jer. 5:9,29; 9:9; Mic. 5:14), sometimes to pagan nations (cf. Ps. 79:10; 149:7; Isa. 59:18; 63:4; Nah. 1:3).

94:2 “the earth” The Hebrew term has a wide semantic field (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 518-526). Only context can determine its meaning (see Special Topic: Land, Country, Earth). Here it could refer to

1. all the planet (i.e., YHWH is the Judge of all the earth, cf. Gen. 18:25)
2. the Promised Land, YHWH is the Covenant God

Which option depends on who “the wicked” of Ps. 94:3 are.

1. non-Israelites
2. Israelites

I think option #2 fits this Psalm best because they are accused of violating Moses’ commands (cf. Ps. 94:6) and then are called “senseless among the people” (cf. 94:8a). YHWH is the righteous Judge (cf. Gen. 18:25; Jdgs. 11:27; Ps 7:11; 50:6; 75:7; Isa. 33:22).

94:3 “How long. . .” This idiom is a way of asking

1. why has God not acted in justice – Ps. 6:3; 74:10; Hab. 1:2; Zech. 1:12
2. will God forgive His people – Ps. 13:1; 79:5; 80:4; 90:13; Isa. 6:11
3. why have the wicked continued their actions – Exod. 10:3; 1 Sam. 1:14; 1 Kgs. 18:21; Ps. 82:2; Jer. 4:14; 12:4; Hos. 8:5; Hab. 2:6

Humans do not understand God’s thoughts, timing, purposes (cf. Isa. 55:9-11). This idiom expresses this lack of knowledge by a question format.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 94:8-11

**⁸Pay heed, you senseless among the people;
And when will you understand, stupid ones?**

⁹He who planted the ear, does He not hear?
 He who formed the eye, does He not see?
¹⁰He who chastens the nations, will He not rebuke,
Even He who teaches man knowledge?
¹¹The LORD knows the thoughts of man,
 That they are a *mere* breath.

94:8-11 This strophe shows how senseless it is to think God does not know (Ps. 94:7).

1. Ps. 94:9 asserts God as the creator of the human body (i.e., ear, eyes)
2. Ps. 94:10 asserts God reveals truth to
 - a. the nations (Ps. 94:10a)
 - b. all humans (Ps. 94:10b)

The conclusion is that YHWH knows the thoughts, motives, and actions of frail mankind (cf. Ps. 94:11; 11:4; 33:13-14; 66:7; Job 11:11; 31:4; 34:21-23; Jer. 16:17; 32:19; Hos. 7:2; Heb. 4:13). We are an open book before our creator! The thoughts of those who are not faithful followers (Ps. 94:15) are vain (BDB 210 I, cf. Ps. 94:4-7,8).

94:8 “you senseless” This is a *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE (BDB 129, KB 146), which comes from the root for cattle or beast (BDB 129). The NOUN is used in parallel to beast in Ps. 73:22. It denotes someone who acts like an animal, without moral restraints. It often denotes idol worshipers (i.e., Jer. 10:8).

▣ **“rebuke”** This VERB (BDB 406, KB 410, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is a court term. This entire Psalm is directed to judges who were meant to reflect YHWH but shockingly reflected the fallen world.

There is a sound play between “chasten” (BDB 415) and “rebuke” (BDB 406) that occurs often (cf. Ps. 6:1; 38:1; Pro. 9:7; Jer. 2:19) and holds humans responsible for His revelations.

94:11 Paul quotes this verse in 1 Cor. 3:20 from the LXX in his discussion of “the wise” in the church at Corinth. Human wisdom is a vain, empty vapor!

YHWH reveals Himself in two ways.

1. natural revelation – Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:19-20
2. special revelation – Ps. 19:7-11; 119

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 94:12-16

¹²Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O LORD,
 And whom You teach out of Your law;
¹³That You may grant him relief from the days of adversity,
 Until a pit is dug for the wicked.
¹⁴For the LORD will not abandon His people,
 Nor will He forsake His inheritance.
¹⁵For judgment will again be righteous,
 And all the upright in heart will follow it.
¹⁶Who will stand up for me against evildoers?
 Who will take his stand for me against those who do wickedness?

94:12-16 As Ps. 94:3-7 and 8-9 describe the words and deeds of the wicked, this strophe relates to the faithful followers.

1. they are blessed (characteristic term of Wisdom Literature, see notes at Ps. 1:1) even by YHWH's discipline (cf. Heb. 12:5-13), Ps. 94:12
2. they are blessed by being taught from YHWH's laws (i.e., Special Revelation, see Special Topic: Terms for God's Revelation and Special Topic: Blessing [OT]), Ps. 94:12
3. they are granted relief (i.e., inner peace, BDB 1052) from the days of adversity, until the wicked are caught in their own schemes, Ps. 94:12
4. they are not abandoned by YHWH, (cf. Ps. 37:28; 1 Sam. 12:22; Lam. 3:31), Ps. 94:14
5. they will receive justice and will walk in it, Ps. 94:15

94:16 This verse shows the individual nature of this Psalm but it is also a plea for the psalmist's friends to help and support him (possibly in court). It could easily apply to the king! But my problem with this royal possibility is that if it were the king, why not just replace the wicked officials?

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 94:17-23

- ¹⁷If the LORD had not been my help,
My soul would soon have dwelt in *the abode of silence*.
- ¹⁸If I should say, "My foot has slipped,"
Your lovingkindness, O LORD, will hold me up.
- ¹⁹When my anxious thoughts multiply within me,
Your consolations delight my soul.
- ²⁰Can a throne of destruction be allied with You,
One which devises mischief by decree?
- ²¹They band themselves together against the life of the righteous
And condemn the innocent to death.
- ²²But the LORD has been my stronghold,
And my God the rock of my refuge.
- ²³He has brought back their wickedness upon them
And will destroy them in their evil;
The LORD our God will destroy them.

94:17-23 This strophe is a series of statements and results.

1. YHWH has been my help, so I will not die, Ps. 94:17
2. when I thought I would fail, YHWH's steadfast covenant love sustained me, Ps. 94:18
3. when I fret, YHWH consoles my soul, Ps. 94:19
4. YHWH has been his stronghold and rock of refuge, Ps. 94:22 (cf. Deut. 32:15; Ps. 18:1-2; 62:6-7; see notes at Ps. 5:11)
5. YHWH has brought back (same VERB in 94:2) upon the wicked their own evil, Ps. 94:20-21,23 (#4 and 5 go together)

94:17

NASB	"in <i>the abode of silence</i> "
NKJV, JPSOA	"in silence"
NRSV, TEV	"in the land of silence"

NJB “in the silence”
LXX “in Hades”

This is imagery for death (cf. Ps. 115:17; i.e., *Sheol*, see Special Topic: *Sheol*). Death was seen as a place of consciousness but silence (cf. Ps. 6:5).

94:18 “My foot has slipped” In the Bible a person’s life is characterized as a path/road/way. Positively the path was smooth, level, straight with no obstruction. Negatively the path was dark, crooked, slippery, with many obstructions.

94:20
NASB “a throne of destruction”
NKJV “the throne of iniquity”
NRSV “wicked rulers”
TEV “corrupt judges”
NJB “a destructive court”
JPSOA “the seat of injustice”
LXX “a throne of lawlessness”

The MT has BDB 490 CONSTRUCT BDB 217. BDB 490 means a seat or place of authority or honor for a king, High Priest, or governor. BDB 217, KB 241 means “power,” “splendor,” or “majesty.” This Psalm is a court scene; YHWH is the judge of the earth (Ps. 94:1-2). Psalm 94:16 also reflects a court scene. Verse 20 refers to wicked leaders (i.e., judges). YHWH cannot be associated with wicked leaders (cf. Ps. 94:10-21). The throne, the temple, and the courts must reflect the character of YHWH. When they do not, which is so often the case, only YHWH Himself is a place of safety!

Psalm 94:20 is the affirmation that YHWH will have no part in corrupt legal proceedings. God is light and in Him is no darkness (cf. 1 John 1:5 and no changing, cf. Mal. 3:6; James 1:17).

▣ **“One which devises mischief by decree”** The PARTICIPLE here is BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal*. It is used in 94:9 of YHWH’s creative activity in forming the human eye. What a contrast! Humans create mischief; YHWH creates humans!

94:21 “life” This is literally *nephesh* (BDB 659). See note online at Ps. 3:2.

94:23 The NASB has “silence” in both Ps. 94:17 and 23, but they are different words in the MT. In Ps. 94:23 (twice) it is “YHWH will annihilate out” (BDB 856, KB 1035, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT). It occurs twice for emphasis.

Just a grammatical note. Notice that all three VERBS in Ps. 94:22 are IMPERFECTS, but they are translated into English as a PAST and two FUTURE VERBS (NRSV, TEV all three FUTURE). Only context can determine the time element of Hebrew VERBS.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the theological problem between Ps. 94:1-2 and 94:3?
2. Who are “the wicked” of Ps. 94:3?
3. How is Ps. 94:6 like Deuteronomy?
4. Does Ps. 94:10 refer to all humans or Israel?
5. Is Ps. 94 16 a court scene?
6. How many strophes are there in Ps. 94:16-23?

PSALM 95

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Praise to the LORD, and Warning Against Unbelief <u>No MT Intro</u>	A Call to Worship and Obedience	A Liturgy of God's Kingship	A Song of Praise	Invitation to Praise
95:1-5	95:1-5	95:1-5	95:1-5	95:1-2 95:3-5
95:6-7	95:6-7b 95:7c-11	95:6-7b 95:7c-11	95:6-7b 95:7c-11	95:6-7b 95:7c-9
95:8-11				95:10-11

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 95:1-5

- ¹O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD,
Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.
²Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving,
Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.
³For the LORD is a great God
And a great King above all gods,
⁴In whose hand are the depths of the earth,

The peaks of the mountains are His also.

**⁵The sea is His, for it was He who made it,
And His hands formed the dry land.**

95:1-5 This strophe is a call (IMPERATIVE and 4 COHORTATIVES) to praise YHWH as King and Creator.

1. O come – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. let us sing for joy – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* COHORTATIVE, cf. Ps. 66:1; 81:1
3. let us shout joyfully – BDB 929, KB 1206, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
4. let us come before His presence (i.e., temple) – BDB 869, KB 1068, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
5. let us shout joyfully – BDB 929, KB 1206, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

These are calls to worship at the temple. The worship is due because YHWH is

1. the rock of our salvation – this and similar descriptions function as titles mostly in Psalms and Isaiah
 - a. God of my salvation – Ps. 88:1; (cf. Ps. 24:5; 27:9)
 - b. my Savior and my God – Ps. 42:5-6, 11; 43:5
 - c. my rock and my salvation – 2 Sam. 22:47; Ps. 62:2, 7; 89:26; 95:1
 - d. God our Savior – Ps. 65:5; 68:19; 85:4; 149:4 (see NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 561)
2. a great God (*El*), cf. Ps. 48:1; 96:4; 135:5; 145:3
3. a great King (cf. 1 Sam. 8:7)
4. above all gods (cf. Exod. 18:11; Ps. 96:4; 97:9; 135:5, see Special Topic: Monotheism; this is the use of *Elohim*, which should retain its PLURAL form, cf. Exod. 3:6; 20:3, see Special Topic: Names for Deity)

95:1 “the rock of our salvation” The imagery of Israel’s God as a rock is recurrent (cf. Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31; 1 Sam. 2:2; 2 Sam. 22:3, 32, 47; 23:3; Ps. 18:2, 31, 46; 28:1; 61:2, 7; 78:35; 89:26; 92:15; 94:22). It describes Him as strong, eternal, stable, and a place of safety and security!

95:4 “the depths of the earth” The word “depths” (מַחְקָר, BDB 350, KB 571) appears only here. It is in a CONSTRUCT relationship with “earth” and parallel to “the peaks of the mountains.” This is obviously a physical creation poetic line (i.e., Ps. 95:4-5), which denotes YHWH’s creation of all physical features of this planet. He is the King and Creator of physical reality (not other ANE deities or myths). Today the question would be, “Is physical creation random or purposeful?” Believers shout “purposeful”!

Just an added thought. In the previous paragraph I related Ps. 95:4 to 95:3a. It is possible to relate it to 95:3b. If so, then “the depths” and “the mountains” would be places the ANE expected the gods to be. In those places it was not “the gods” (*elohim*) but YHWH, the *Elohim* of creation (Genesis 1-2) who reigns!

▣ **“hand”** Notice that “hand” appears again in Psalm 95:5. See Special Topic: Hand.

95:5 “The sea. . . He who made it” It is surprising that in Genesis 1 the only earthly element not spoken into existence was water (salt and fresh). God does separate the waters and controls their boundaries but He is not said to create them, so too, Psalm 104.

However, the theological assertion that He created all things including the “seas” is made in Neh. 9:6; Ps. 95:5; 146:6; Jonah 1:9.

Also notice that Ps. 95:5b asserts God formed (BDB 427, KB 468, *Qal* PERFECT) dry land. Genesis 1:9-10 asserts it was by the spoken word. Remember this is ANE imagery. We should not create theology on poetic lines. I think Genesis 1-11 is both historical and literary. Please see the exegetical commentary

on Genesis at www.freebiblecommentary.org. Western, modern people are far too literal and atomistic in their approach to Scripture (see online Seminar on Bible Interpretation).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 95:6-7

⁶Come, let us worship and bow down,

Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

⁷For He is our God,

And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.

Today, if you would hear His voice,

95:6-11 This strophe is addressed to the Covenant people, calling them to

1. worship (Ps. 95:6)
 - a. come (lit. “come in”; different word from Ps. 95:1 but parallel) – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. let us worship – BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishtaphel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
 - c. let us bow down – BDB 502, KB 499, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
 - d. let us kneel before – BDB 138, KB 159, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
2. respond in faith (Ps. 95:7)
3. not be hard hearted, as they were in the past (i.e., wilderness wandering period, Ps. 95:8-11)

95:6 “our Maker” Genesis 2:7 describes the special formation of Adam. The animals are said to be formed out of the ground also in Gen. 2:19 (same VERB, BDB 427, KB 428).

In Ps. 139:13-16 (“weave,” BDB 697, KB 754) and Job 31:15 (“made,” BDB 793, KB 889, also Ps. 139:15) God forms each human in the womb. The variety is literary but the truth is God did it/does it (cf. Ps. 100:3; 149:2; Isa. 17:7; Hos. 8:14). Humans are a special creation of God in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27) for the purpose of fellowship! To miss this is to miss the value and dignity of humankind (cf. Psalm 8).

95:7c-11 It is interesting how the OT characterizes the wilderness wandering period differently.

1. positively
 - a. Deut. 32:10-14
 - b. Jeremiah 2
 - c. Hosea 2:15; 9:10; 11:1-2
2. negatively
 - a. Num. 14:1-17
 - b. Ps. 95:8-11
 - c. Ezekiel 23

This is the dilemma of all of our lives. None is perfect. There are good days and bad days, areas of strength and weakness. Thank God for His unchanging, merciful character, the New Covenant (i.e., Jer. 31:31-34), and His Messiah (i.e., NT revelation).

95:7 God as Shepherd and His people as sheep is common OT imagery (see notes at Psalm 23).

The intimacy between Shepherd and sheep is strong and constant. It is ridiculous and dangerous for sheep not to listen to their shepherd! The Fall has affected us all!

1. they did not listen (Ps. 95:7c, quoted in Heb. 3:7-11,15; 4:7)
2. they harden their hearts
 - a. Meribah – Exod. 17:7; Num. 20:13

- b. Massah – Exod. 17:7; Deut. 6:16
- 3. they tested God – Num. 14:22

Several of the English translations start a new paragraph at Ps. 95:7c because at this point in the Psalm, YHWH is speaking (i.e., Ps. 95:7c-11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 95:8-11

- ⁸**Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
As in the day of Massah in the wilderness,**
⁹**“When your fathers tested Me,
They tried Me, though they had seen My work.**
¹⁰**For forty years I loathed *that* generation,
And said they are a people who err in their heart,
And they do not know My ways.**
¹¹**Therefore I swore in My anger,
Truly they shall not enter into My rest.”**

95:9 The fact that Israel had experienced the miracles of the exodus and the protection and provisions of the wilderness made their unbelief and lack of trust all the more serious.

95:10 “forty years” See Special Topic: Symbolic Numbers in Scripture. Forty is often a round number.

95:11 “I swore in My anger” Humans are forced to use vocabulary of this world to describe God, His thoughts, feelings, and actions but they are only metaphors (see Special Topic: God Described as Human).

These metaphors are true but not exhaustive. They do truthfully assert the reality of the consequences of unbelief and rebellion, both in time and beyond! This generation of Israelites, including Aaron and Moses, did not enter Canaan (cf. Hebrews 3-4; Deut. 3:20; 12:9; 25:19).

This psalmist is imploring worship, trust, and obedience to YHWH. He is worthy of praise and faith! Hebrews 3-4 uses this text to assert three senses of “rest.”

1. peace with God
2. the Promised Land
3. heaven

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Explain the possible origins of the phrase “rock of our salvation.”
2. How does Ps. 95:4 relate to Ps. 95:3b?
3. Why is “the sea” not mentioned as being created by *Elohim* in Genesis 1?
4. Explain the implications of the contingency (i.e., “if”) of Ps. 95:7c.
5. How do we test/try God?
6. Explain the use of the term “rest” in Hebrews 3-4, which quotes this Psalm.

PSALM 96

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Call to Worship the LORD the Righteous Judge <u>No MT Intro</u>	A Song of Praise To God Coming in Judgment	A Hymn Celebrating God's Kingship	God the Supreme King	Yahweh, King and Judge
96:1-6	96:1-3	96:1-6	96:1-3	96:1-2a 96:2b-3
	96:4-6		96:4-6	96:4-5a 96:5b-6
96:7-10	96:7-9	96:7-9	96:7-9	96:7-8a 96:8b-9
	96:10	96:10-13	96:10-13	96:10
96:11-13	96:11-13			96:11-12 96:13

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is an extremely exciting and important Psalm. It develops the universal implication of monotheism (see Special Topic: Monotheism). It also develops the implication of the ethical aspect of monotheism (i.e., a world of justice and righteousness). This may reflect an eschatological court scene, like Matt. 25:31-46 and Rev. 20:11-15.
- B. This Psalm has an eschatological reference. The whole earth (cf. Ps. 96:1,3,7,9,10,13) will one day acknowledge YHWH's supremacy; "YHWH reigns" (cf. Isa. 52:7)!

- C. This Psalm is quoted in 1 Chr. 16:23-33 as part of a larger Psalm(s) [i.e., Ps. 96:1-36] in connection with David's bringing the ark into Jerusalem. In context David (LXX), Asaph, or his family could be the human author. The MT has no introductory phrase.
- D. This Psalm reflects a universal worship setting of all peoples where the attributes and actions of the one God (i.e., King and Judge) are praised! This was the purpose of the outer court of the Temple (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:43,60; Isa. 56:7; Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17).
- E. This Psalm is general enough to fit several visitations of YHWH. The "new song" speaks of God's ongoing activity of redemption, not just to Israel, but to all flesh. His salvation is universal (cf. Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan).
- F. Although there is no specific messianic reference it is obvious from further revelation that the mechanism for accomplishing this universal redemption and reign is the Messiah (see Special Topic: Messiah, i.e., Isaiah 6; 9; Daniel 7; Micah 5).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 96:1-6

- ¹**Sing to the LORD a new song;
Sing to the LORD , all the earth.**
- ²**Sing to the LORD , bless His name;
Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.**
- ³**Tell of His glory among the nations,
His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.**
- ⁴**For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised;
He is to be feared above all gods.**
- ⁵**For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
But the LORD made the heavens.**
- ⁶**Splendor and majesty are before Him,
Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.**

96:1 "Sing to the LORD" This is an IMPERATIVE repeated three times for emphasis (also in Ps. 96:7-8; this was a literary way to form a Hebrew superlative, cf. Isa. 6:3, or a poetic way of denoting emphasis, cf. Ps. 103:10,21,22; 118:2,3,4; 135:1; 136:1,2,3; Jer. 7:4; 22:29). It is YHWH's will that "all the earth" sing and bless Him. It is Israel's job to make YHWH's character and acts known to the world. All creation will praise Him (cf. Ps. 96:11-12; 103:19-22; 145:10).

▣ "a new song" This phrase is used often in the Bible (cf. Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 98:1; 144:9; Isa. 42:10; Rev. 5:9; 14:3). God is always doing a new redemptive thing for His human creation. This seems to refer to His coming in salvation for all nations (cf. Ps. 96:13).

The word "new" (BDB 294 I, cf. Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 90:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1) is used often in Isaiah denoting YHWH's new creative activity. The "new" is really what YHWH wanted original creation to be. The results and influence of the Fall are reversed and eliminated! The Bible starts in Eden (Genesis 1-4) and ends in a new Eden (Revelation 21-22).

Isaiah uses this term to describe several things.

1. new things – Isa. 42:9; 48:6
2. new song – Isa. 42:10 (Rev. 5:9; 14:3)
3. something new – Isa. 43:19 (Rev. 3:12)
4. new names – Isa. 62:2 (Rev. 2:17; 3:12)
5. new heaven and new earth – Isa. 65:17; 66:22 (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:5)

▣ **“all the earth”** This universal theme is repeated over and over again in this Psalm (cf. Ps. 96:3,7,9,10,13). See Special Topic: Land, Country, Earth. Please, please take the time to look at the Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan. It is the integrating center of my theology.

96:2 “bless His name” This also is an IMPERATIVE (BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel*). The word’s root meaning is “to kneel down” in worship. Therefore, this would denote a temple liturgy or confession (cf. Ps. 26:12; 100:4; 134:1-2; 135:19-20; Neh. 9:5).

▣ **“Proclaim good tidings”** This is another *Piel* IMPERATIVE (BDB 142, KB 163). The good news could refer to the character of YHWH or His acts of deliverance/redemption (cf. Isa. 40:9; 41:27; 52:7; 60:6; Nah. 1:15). In this context it refers to YHWH’s redemption of all the earth (the “tell” of Ps. 96:3a is parallel, it is also a *Piel* IMPERATIVE, BDB 707, KB 765).

▣ **“from day to day”** AB makes an interesting point about

1. possibly, ים – sea and יום – day are spelled alike in Phoenician (p. 357)
2. from sea to sea (cf. Ps. 72:8; Zech. 9:10) fits the universal nature of the Psalm better (p. 357)

It should also be noted that the “seas” are referred to in Ps. 96:11.

▣ **“salvation”** In the OT this (BDB 447) referred to physical deliverance (see Special Topic: Salvation [OT]), but in the NT the connotation changes to spiritual deliverance (see Special Topic: Greek Verb Tenses Used for Salvation). This eschatological Psalm spans both covenants and links both aspects.

96:3 “glory” This term is used in Ps. 96:3,7,8. It has a wide usage in the OT. It comes from the commercial usage, “to be heavy,” as in a valuable metal. It is used of

1. YHWH’s name – Ps. 29:2; 66:2; 96:8
2. YHWH’s person – Exod. 24:16-17; 33:18,22; 40:34-35; Num. 14:22
3. YHWH’s actions – Exod. 16:7,12

See Special Topic: Glory (*kabod*, OT).

▣ **“His wonderful deeds”** See Special Topic: Wonderful Things.

96:4 “greatly to be praised. . .to be feared” This is the same as Ps. 48:1. These two do not seem to fit together, yet they both reflect an appropriate attitude toward God. “Fear” (BDB 431, KB 432, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) means awe or respect (see Special Topic: Fear [OT]).

▣ **“above all gods”** Psalm 96:4 and 5 speak of the “*elohim* of the peoples.” There is a Hebrew word play between “god” – *elohim* (BDB 43, 96:4) and “idols” – *elilim* (lit. “weak,” “nothing,” BDB 47, cf. Ps. 96:5; NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 411).

The gods (*elohim*) of the nations were thought to be fallen angels by the early church fathers, but surely, in this context it refers to pagan idols, while in Ps. 89:5,7 it refers to the angelic council. The term *elohim* can refer to (1) YHWH; (2) human judges or leaders; or (3) angels (see Special Topic: Names for Deity).

96:5 “the LORD made the heavens” The supremacy of YHWH is evidenced by His creation of the world (cf. Ps. 96:10,11-12). He, and He alone, is the creator!

96:6 Notice the personified (cf. Ps. 23:6) NOUNS used to denote YHWH’s personal presence.

1. splendor – BDB 217 I, cf. 1 Chr. 16:27; 29:11; Ps. 104:1; 111:3; 145:5; 148:13; Job 37:22; 40:10; Hab. 3:3
2. majesty – BDB 214, cf. 1 Chr. 16:27; Ps. 90:16; 104:1; 111:3; 145:5; Job 40:11; Isa. 2:10,19,21
3. strength – BDB 738, cf. 1 Chr. 16:27; Job 12:16; Ps. 62:11; 63:2; 68:34; 93:1
4. beauty – BDB 802, cf. 1 Chr. 29:11; Ps. 71:8; 89:13; Isa. 63:12,14,15

I like the UBS *Handbook*’s suggestion that #1 and #2 are royal terms (cf. Ps. 21:5; 45:3), while #3 and #4 relate to the ark of the covenant in Ps. 78:61 (p. 834). Notice that line 1 ends in “before Him” (YHWH as King) and line 2 ends with “in His sanctuary,” which contains the ark!

For a good discussion on

1. personification or anthropomorphism used in the Bible see G. B. Carid, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, pp. 172-182
2. mythology used in the Bible, pp. 219-242
3. eschatology in the Bible, pp. 243-271

This book has been very helpful to me on the literary imagery of the Bible!

▣ **“in His sanctuary”** This could refer to the heavenly temple (cf. Exod. 25:8-9) or the earthly temple. The earthly was a mere copy of the heavenly (cf. Heb. 8:5; 9:23). The Psalm of Thanksgiving of 1 Chronicles 16 obviously is the earthly (cf. Hebrews 9-10).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 96:7-10

⁷**Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,**

Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

⁸**Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name;**

Bring an offering and come into His courts.

⁹**Worship the LORD in holy attire;**

Tremble before Him, all the earth.

¹⁰**Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns;**

Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved;

He will judge the peoples with equity.”

96:7 “Ascribe” This threefold repetition (three *Qal* IMPERATIVES, BDB 396, KB 393) reflects Ps. 29:1-2, where angels praise YHWH. Here it is all the people of the earth. The implications of monotheism (see Special Topic: Monotheism) are universal, not national. See Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan.

96:8 “the glory of His name” The name represents the person (cf. Isa. 42:8, see Special Topic: Shadow as a Metaphor for Protection and Care). He is worthy of glory and honor (for the connotation of “glory” in this text cf. Mal. 1:6). This concept is a recurrent theme (cf. 1 Chr. 16:29; Ps. 29:2; 66:2; 79:9).

▣ The second line of this verse has two more *Qal* IMPERATIVES.

1. bring an offering – BDB 669, KB 724
2. come into His courts – BDB 97, KB 112

Like the first strophe (Ps. 96:1-6), this refers to temple worship.

96:9 “Worship. . .Tremble” These are two IMPERATIVES related to temple activities.

1. worship (lit. “bow down”) – BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hithpael* or *Hishtaphel*), cf. Ps. 29:2
2. tremble – BDB 296, KB 297, *Qal*, the term can denote
 - a. writhing in pain
 - b. dancing in worship (cf. Ps. 96:8, cf. NEB and Jdgs. 21:21)
 - c. whirling, as in combat, with a sword
 - d. tremble of
 - (1) the earth, Ps. 97:4; 104:32; 114:7
 - (2) human worshipers, Ps. 96:9 (i.e., awe and respect)

▣ **“in holy attire”** This phrase (BDB 214 CONSTRUCT BDB 871) is uncertain in Hebrew. It can mean (1) clothing appropriate for worship (cf. 1 Chr. 16:29; 2 Chr. 20:21; Ps. 29:2; 110:3) or (2) a reference to the Lord’s coming (cf. Ps. 96:13, TEV).

Just a possible clarification to the first option (i.e., appropriate clothing for worship). The term *elilm* (BDB 43) is a rare Hebrew word. AB thinks it may be related to the Ugaritic term for “rage” (pp. 356, 358). If so, then there is a contrast set up between how YHWH’s worshipers are dressed (Ps. 96:9) and the dreadful way the pagan idols are dressed (Ps. 96:5) and worshiped.

96:10 “The LORD reigns” This is a common affirmation in the Psalms (cf. Ps. 93:1; 97:1; 99:1). It refers to YHWH as king over all creation (cf. Ps. 95:3-5). He reigns now (cf. Isa. 52:7) but the reign is contested. One day His kingship will be clearly manifested (cf. Ps. 96:13; Zech. 14:9; Matt. 6:10; 1 Cor. 15:25-28).

96:10 “the world is firmly established, it will not be moved” In this strophe this phrase does not refer to initial creation (Genesis 1-2) but the new creation (Revelation 21-22; 2 Pet. 3:4-7, 10-13). This world has been damaged by sin and rebellion. It will last a long time but not permanently. This is a violent universe. Unless God acts, this planet cannot survive.

▣ **“He will judge the peoples”** There is but one God. He is a righteous, ethical, covenant-making God! All flesh will give an account to Him (cf. Gen. 18:25; Ps. 9:8; 58:11; 67:4; 94:2; 98:9; Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 96:11-13

- ¹¹Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
Let the sea roar, and all it contains;
¹²Let the field exult, and all that is in it.
Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy
¹³Before the LORD, for He is coming,
For He is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
And the peoples in His faithfulness.

96:11-12 All creation rejoices (personification) at the coming of the creator (i.e., Ps. 103:19-22; 145:10; Isa. 49:13; Rom. 8:19-22).

Notice all the JUSSIVES.

1. let the heavens be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense; for “heavens” see Special Topic: Heaven
2. let the earth rejoice – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* JUSSIVE; the use of “heaven” and “earth” was an idiomatic way of calling on all creation to praise God (cf. Gen. 1:1)
3. let the sea roar – BDB 947, KB 1266, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense; remember the sea could represent (1) initial chaotic ANE gods (cf. Ps. 89:9-10; 93:3-4) or (2) a tripartite creation (i.e., “heavens,” “earth,” “sea,” cf. Amos 9:6; Hag. 2:6, see NIDOTTE, vol. 2, pp. 463-465)
4. let the field exult – BDB 759, KB 831, *QAL* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
5. let the trees . . . sing for joy – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

96:13 “He is coming” In one sense YHWH is always with His creation. He is going to clearly manifest His presence to His creation. Creation convulses and exults at His presence. He comes for

1. blessing
2. judgment

This phrase (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) is repeated for emphasis, as a prayer, and as an affirmation.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Terms for the Second Coming

▣ **“in righteousness. . .in faithfulness”** These are in a parallel relationship. God is true and faithful. He will set all things right! See Special Topic: Righteousness and Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT. This concept is also mentioned in Ps. 96:10c (i.e., uprightness, cf. Ps. 75:2; 98:9).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How is this Psalm so relevant to the new covenant as well as the old?
2. List the universal elements of the Psalm. What is their implication?
3. Why does nature rejoice at YHWH’s coming?
4. How is judgment a day of joy?

PSALM 97

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD's Power and Dominion <u>No MT Intro</u>	A Song of Praise To the Sovereign LORD	Hymn Celebrating God's Kingship	God the Supreme Ruler	The Triumph of Yahweh
97:1-6	97:1 97:2-6	97:1-5 97:6-9	97:1-6	97:1-2 97:3-4 97:5-6
97:7-9	97:7-9		97:7-9	97:7 97:8 97:9
97:10-12	97:10-12	97:10-12	97:10-12	97:10 97:11-12

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm, like Psalm 96, has a worldwide emphasis (eschatological).
 1. the earth, Ps. 97:1 (see Special Topic: Land, Country, Earth)
 2. the world, Ps. 97:4
 3. the Lord (*Adon*) of the whole earth, Ps. 97:5b (cf. Jos. 3:13; Mic. 4:13)
 4. all the peoples, Ps. 97:6b
 5. You are the Lord Most High over all the earth, Ps. 97:9a

6. You are exalted far above all gods (*Elohim*), Ps. 97:9b
- B. The imagery could come from
 1. Mt. Sinai, Exodus 19 (i.e., blessings, cf. Exod. 19:9; Deut. 4:11)
 2. Psalm 18:7-15 (i.e., judgment)
 YHWH's presence for blessing or judgment causes the physical creation to convulse (cf. Psalm 97:4-5).
 - C. The last strophe highlights the obedience aspect to covenant faith. I often say that A MATURE biblical faith is
 1. a person to be welcomed
 2. truths about that person to be believed
 3. a life like that person to be lived

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 97:1-6

¹The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice;
 Let the many islands be glad.
²Clouds and thick darkness surround Him;
 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.
³Fire goes before Him
 And burns up His adversaries round about.
⁴His lightnings lit up the world;
 The earth saw and trembled.
⁵The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the LORD,
 At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
⁶The heavens declare His righteousness,
 And all the peoples have seen His glory.

97:1-6 See Contextual Insights A and B.

97:1 “The LORD reigns” The VERB is *Qal* PERFECT (BDB 573 II, KB 590, cf. 1 Chr. 16:31; Ps. 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1), which denotes completed action. In one sense YHWH has always reigned, is reigning and, will forever reign (i.e., He is God, cf. Exod. 15:18; Ps. 10:16; 29:10; 1 Cor. 15:24-28), but the evidence of this is often missing in this fallen world. Faith sees and affirms but one day all will recognize and affirm.

The IMPERFECT is used in Ps. 146:10 and the future reign is denoted in Isa. 24:23; Ezek. 20:23 and Micah 4:7. We know now from NT revelation that the Messiah's reign (cf. Zech. 9:9) is included in the Father's reign (cf. Jer. 23:5; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Cor. 15:24-28). Things may look bad but believers know, “Our God reigns!” (CF. Isa. 52:7)

▣ In light of YHWH's reign,

1. let the earth rejoice – BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* JUSSIVE; this refers to
 - a. faithful followers in all nations
 - b. the conversion of the nations to faith in YHWH

2. let the many islands be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense; the “islands” (lit. “coastlands,” BDB 15) denotes a universal emphasis (cf. Psalm 96), often referring to the known world (i.e., those ports near and far visited by Phoenician commerce, i.e., Ps. 72:8-10). “The earth” of line 1 is parallel to “the many islands” of line 2.

97:2 The imagery of Ps. 97:2a could come from two sources. See Contextual Insights, B. In this strophe it seems to reflect the God of revelation (i.e., a theophany), not judgment. His adversaries are defeated but the faithful of the whole earth rejoice at His “light” and presence!

▣ **“cloud”** The use of “clouds” in both the OT and the NT is very interesting. I have included notes from Deut. 4:11 and Rev. 1:7

Deut. 4:11 “darkness, cloud and thick gloom” YHWH’s physical presence can be understood in two ways:

1. volcanic activity – Exod. 19:18; Ps. 68:7-8; 77:18; 97:2-5; Jdgs. 5:4-5; 2 Sam. 22:8; Isa. 29:6; Jer. 10:10

2. storm – Exod. 19:16,19; Ps. 68:8; 77:18; Jdgs. 5:4; Isa. 29:6; Nahum 1:3

Therefore, the deep darkness (cf. 5:22; II Sam. 22:10; I Kgs. 8:12; II Chr. 6:1) might be:

1. ash clouds
2. rain clouds

This covering was for Israel’s protection (cf. Exod. 19:18). They thought that if humans looked upon God they would die (cf. Gen. 16:13; 32:30; Exod. 3:6; 20:19; 33:20; Jdgs. 6:22-23; 13:22).

See Special Topic: Coming On the Clouds.

Rev. 1:7 “BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS” This verse may have been an exclamation by the angel of Rev. 1:1. It is an obvious reference to the Second Coming of Christ.

▣ **“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne”** “Throne” is an idiom for reign/kingship. YHWH’s reign has an ethical dimension, as does His creation (cf. Ps. 97:10-12).

This very phrase is used in Ps. 89:14. We must be careful not to separate justification from sanctification (cf. Matt. 28:18-20).

97:3 “Fire” See Special Topic: Fire.

▣ **“and burns up His adversaries round about”** AB suggests that the MT’s last phrase in Hebrew can be revocalized to read “and blazes round His back” (p. 361). It suggests this best explains Ps. 50:3 and Joel 2:3. This fits the parallelism of Ps. 97:4 better.

97:4 “the earth” Like so many other NOUNS in this Psalm, this is a personification, a common Hebrew poetic technique.

97:6 This verse is theologically and lexically related to Ps. 19:1-6. The universal aspect of YHWH’s revelation is revealed in creation/nature (i.e., natural revelation, cf. Rom. 1:19-20; 2:14-15). See notes at Ps. 19:1-6.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 97:7-9

⁷Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images,

**Who boast themselves of idols;
Worship Him, all you gods.
⁸Zion heard *this* and was glad,
And the daughters of Judah have rejoiced
Because of Your judgments, O LORD.
⁹For You are the LORD Most High over all the earth;
You are exalted far above all gods.**

97:7-9 Three persons are addressed in this strophe.

1. idolaters, Ps. 97:7
 - a. let them be ashamed (BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense)
 - b. who boast (lit. “glory,” BDB 237, KB 248, *Hithpael*)
 - c. even their false gods must worship YHWH (BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishtaphel* IMPERATIVE, quoted in Heb. 1:6 from LXX, cf. Deut. 32:43 in LXX)
2. Judeans (or Israelites), Ps. 97:8
 - a. Zion was glad (BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT with *waw*, cf. Ps. 48:11)
 - b. daughters of Judah rejoiced (BDB 162, JKB 189, *Qal* IMPERFECT with *waw*) because of YHWH’s judgments
 - c. it is surely possible that #a above stands for Jerusalem and #b for the surrounding unwalled villages
3. Israel’s Deity, Ps. 97:9
 - a. YHWH (BDB 217)
 - b. Most High (*Elyon*, BDB 75, cf. Ps. 47:2)
 - c. exalted (BDB 748, KB 828, *Niphal* PERFECT) far above all gods (*elohim*, see note at Ps. 95:3)

97:7 “graven images. . .idols” These are in a parallel poetic relationship.

1. graven images – BDB 820; the basic meaning is that which is hewn into a shape (cf. Exod. 20:4; Deut. 4:16,23,25; 5:8; 27:15; Jdgs. 18:31; Isa. 40:19,20; 42:17; 44:9,10,17; 45:20). It is found only here in the Psalter but a related root is in Ps. 78:58.
2. idols – BDB 47; the basic meaning is that which is weak, insufficient, worthless (cf. 1Chr. 16:26; Job 13:4; Ps. 96:5; Isa. 2:8,18,20; Jer. 14:14). It is found only twice in the Psalter.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 97:10-12

**¹⁰Hate evil, you who love the LORD,
Who preserves the souls of His godly ones;
He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
¹¹Light is sown *like seed* for the righteous
And gladness for the upright in heart.
¹²Be glad in the LORD, you righteous ones,
And give thanks to His holy name.**

97:10-12 This strophe describes the appropriate way to exalt YHWH. He is the One who

1. preserves the souls (*nephesh*, BDB 659, see note at Gen. 35:18 online) of His godly ones (BDB 339, see note at Ps. 31:23)

2. delivers them from the hand of the wicked
3. sows light for the righteous (cf. Ps. 97:4a)
4. sows gladness for the upright in heart

How then should His godly ones respond?

1. hate evil – BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. love YHWH – BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
3. be glad in the Lord – BDB 970, KB 1330, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 32:11
4. give thanks to His holy name – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 30:4

97:11 “light is sown” The MT has “sown” (זָרַע, BDB 281, KB 282) but the LXX, Peshitta, and Vulgate have “dawn” (וֹרָחָה, BDB 280), which seems to fit the imagery better (NRSV, TEV, REB, cf. Ps. 112:40).

The UBS Text Project (p. 371) gives “sown” a “C” rating (i.e., considerable doubt).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. How is this Psalm related to the previous Psalm?
2. What is Ps 97:2a describing?
3. How are Ps. 97:4a and 6 related to “Natural Revelation”?
4. Who are “the gods” of Ps. 97:9b?
5. What does YHWH tell His faithful followers to do in the last strophe?

PSALM 98

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Call to Praise the LORD for His Righteousness <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm	A Song of Praise to the LORD for His Salvation and Judgment	Hymn Proclaiming the Future Establishment of God's Kingship on the Earth	God the Ruler of the World	The Judge of the World
98:1-3	98:1-3	98:1-3	98:1-3	98:1 98:2-3b 98:3c-4
98:4-6	98:4-6	98:4-6	98:4-6	98:5-6
98:7-9	98:7-9	98:7-9	98:7-9	98:7-8 98:9

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The universal element, so prominent in Psalms 96 and 97, continues (i.e., Ps. 98:3b, 4a, 7, 9a,b).
 1. "in the sight of the nations," Ps. 98:2
 2. "all the ends of the earth have seen," Ps. 98:3
 3. "all the earth," Ps. 98:4
 4. "the sea. . . all it contains," Ps. 98:7
 5. "the world and those who dwell in it," Ps. 98:7
 6. "to judge the earth," Ps. 98:9
 7. "judge the world," Ps. 98:9

8. “the peoples,” Ps. 98:9

Please read the Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan. It is the integrating center of my theology!

- B. YHWH is coming as King and Judge to the whole world and especially to Israel. He is coming as the One who made promises to the Patriarchs (cf. Ps. 98:3a).
- C. The first strophe has six PERFECTS (completed action) which detail what YHWH has done (or will do; the time element in Hebrew VERBS is determined by context).
 - 1. has done wonderful things, Ps. 98:1
 - 2. has gained victory, Ps. 98:1
 - 3. has made known His salvation, Ps. 98:2
 - 4. has revealed His righteousness, Ps. 98:2
 - 5. has remembered His lovingkindness and faithfulness, Ps. 98:3
 - 6. all the earth has seen His salvation, Ps. 98:3

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 98:1-3

**¹O sing to the LORD a new song,
For He has done wonderful things,
His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him.
²The LORD has made known His salvation;
He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.
³He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel;
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.**

98:1 “O sing to the LORD a new song” This is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. One can see why Psalm 95; 96; and 98 were placed close together in the Psalter by the editor(s).

The “new song” was a response from the covenant people to their God’s deliverance, forgiveness, and displays of power (cf. Ps. 98:1b, 33:3:40:3; 96:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa. 42:10; Rev. 5:9; 14:3). YHWH acted on their behalf. He, and He alone, was responsible (Ps. 98:1c). However, Ps. 37:40 shows that YHWH’s salvation/deliverance is linked to human faith and faithfulness. The covenant (see Special Topic: Covenant) combines YHWH’s sovereign initiation and mankind’s expected obedient, continuing response (see Special Topic: Election/Predestination and the Need for a Theological Balance).

Notice the number of VERBS used in this Psalm that refer to making sounds.

- 1. sing, Ps. 98:1 – BDB 1010, KB 1479
- 2. make known, Ps. 98:2 – BDB 393, KB 390
- 3. shout joyfully, Ps. 98:4 – BDB 929, KB 1206
- 4. break forth, Ps. 98:4 – BDB 822, KB 953
- 5. sing for joy, Ps. 98:4 – BDB 943, KB 1247
- 6. sing praises, Ps. 98:4 – BDB 274, KB 273
- 7. sing praises, Ps. 98:5 – same as #6
- 8. shout joyfully, Ps. 98:6 – same as #3
- 9. sea roar, Ps. 98:7 – BDB 947, KB 1266
- 10. rivers clap, Ps. 98:8 – BDB 561, KB 567

11. mountains sing, Ps. 98:8 – same as #5, but *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

▣ **“wonderful things”** See Special Topic: Wonderful Things.

▣ **“hand”** Theologically this is parallel to Isa. 52:10. The victory is His and His alone! See Special Topic: Hand.

▣ **“have gained victory”** This VERB (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* PERFECT) means “to save,” “to bring victory” (cf. Isa. 59:16; 63:5). The victory (depending on the contextual intended timeframe) could refer to

1. initial creation (i.e., victory over watery chaos, i.e., Ps. 65:7; 89:9-10; 93:34)
2. the exodus/conquest (cf. Isa. 51:9-10, i.e., Red Sea and Jordan River)
3. vanquishing the gods (*elohim*) of the nations (cf. Ps. 2:1; 65:7-8)
4. return from exile (cf. Isaiah 40-45)
5. ultimate victory over evil (i.e., Gen. 3:15; Matt. 1:21; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21)

98:2 “LORD” See Special Topic: Names For Deity.

▣ **“salvation”** See Special Topic: Salvation (OT).

▣ **“righteousness”** See Special Topic: Righteousness.

▣ **“in the sight of the nations”** See Ps. 46:10 and Isa. 52:10. Not just so they can see, but that they might be changed and redeemed!

98:3 “His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel” This refers to YHWH’s promises to the Patriarchs, beginning with Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1; 17:1-8; Ps. 105:8-15,42; 106:45).

See Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*) and

Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT

▣ **“All the ends of the earth”** See Contextual Insights, A.

The NIDOTTE, p. 521, has a list of how the phrase, “the ends of the earth,” is used.

1. YHWH’s name and praise – Ps. 48:10; Isa. 42:10
2. fear of God – Ps. 67:7
3. knowledge of God’s rule – Ps. 59:13
4. the salvation of God – Ps. 98:3; Isa. 49:6; 52:10
5. His message of redemption – Isa. 48:20; 62:11
6. Messianic King’s reign – Ps. 2:7; Micah 5:4

For me, this international, multi-ethnic, universal emphasis is the focus and fruition of “monotheism” (see Special Topic: Monotheism).

The AB (pp. 365-366) revocalizes the two PERFECT VERBS to make them IMPERATIVES.

1. “remember” – BDB 269, KB 269 (this would refer to Israel)
2. “see” – BDB 906, KB 1157 (this would refer to “all the ends of the earth”)

Although this makes sense, it does not fit the string of PERFECTS and the parallel between Ps. 98:2 and 3. The IMPERATIVES would fit better with the next strophe (Ps. 98:4-6).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 98:4-6

**⁴Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth;
Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises.
⁵Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,
With the lyre and the sound of melody.
⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn
Shout joyfully before the King, the LORD.**

98:4-6 This strophe has six IMPERATIVES exhorting all humans to praise the God of Israel (cf. Ps. 98:3a). This may reflect a coronation celebration in Israel (cf. Ps. 47:5-9).

1. shout joyfully, Ps. 98:4 – BDB 929, KB 1206, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. break forth, Ps. 98:4 – BDB 822, KB 953, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. sing for joy, Ps. 98:4 – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
4. sing praises, Ps. 98:4 – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
5. sing praises, Ps. 98:5 – same as #4
6. shout joyfully, Ps. 98:6 – same as #1

Israel and the whole earth rejoiced and proclaimed the faithfulness, fairness, holiness, power, and righteousness of the God of creation and redemption (see Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel's God).

This is not the world God created it to be! This is not the world it one day will be!

98:6 “horn” This is the *shofar* (BDB 1051). See Special Topic: Horns Used by Israel.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 98:7-9

**⁷Let the sea roar and all it contains,
The world and those who dwell in it.
⁸Let the rivers clap their hands,
Let the mountains sing together for joy
⁹Before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth;
He will judge the world with righteousness
And the peoples with equity.**

98:7-9 The last strophe has three JUSSIVES expressing the need for personified creation (cf. Ps. 104:19-22) and humans to praise the righteous Judge of creation.

1. let the seas roar – BDB 947, KB 1266, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 96:11
2. let the world praise (implied in the parallelism but not stated)
3. let the rivers clap – BDB 561, KB 567, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. let the mountains sing – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Ps. 98:4b, 89:12; Isa. 55:12

Numbers 1 and 2 are parallel and denote humans. Numbers 3 and 4 are parallel and denote physical creation.

98:8 “He is coming” This is a *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. When thinking of YHWH “coming,” several items must be emphasized.

1. He has never left. He is always here!
2. His special coming or presence can be for
 - a. blessings

- b. judgment (as here, cf. Ps. 9:7-8; 96:13)
- 3. His coming brings the expectation of a new day (i.e., the restoration of the fellowship of Eden)
- 4. This theological concept has been supplemented by the two comings of the Messiah.
 - a. the first fulfilled most OT predictions
 - b. the second will consummate YHWH's reign

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the content of the "new song"?
2. What victory is Ps. 98:1 addressing?
3. How does Ps. 98:3 relate to Genesis 12?
4. What regular event in Israel's cultic calendar does Ps. 98:4-6 relate to?
5. Explain the different ways YHWH's coming can be understood.

PSALM 99

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Praise to the LORD for His Fidelity to Israel <u>No MT Intro</u>	Praise to the LORD for His Holiness	Hymn Celebrating God's Kingship	God the Supreme King	God, the Upright and Holy King
99:1-5	99:1-3	99:1-5	99:1-3	99:1-2a 99:2b-3b 99:3c-e
	99:4-5		99:4-5	99:4 99:5
99:6-9	99:6-7	99:6-7	99:6-7	99:6 99:6 99:8 99:9
	99:8-9	99:8-9	99:8-9	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm extolls YHWH's reign (cf. Ps. 93:1; 96:10; 97:1). Even Ps. 99:4 could, and probably does, refer to YHWH (i.e., the Mighty King). YHWH was Israel's true King (cf. 1 Sam. 8:7; Ps. 47:3; 48:2; 95:3).

- B. This Psalm reflects the
1. wilderness wandering period
 - a. the ark (Ps. 99:1b, 5b)
 - b. Moses and Aaron (Ps. 99:6a)
 - c. the pillar of cloud (Ps. 99:7a)
 - d. the giving of the Law at Sinai (Ps. 99:7b,c)
 - e. forgiveness (Ps. 99:8, cf. Num. 14:20)
 2. early united monarchy (cf. Ps. 99:6b, i.e., Samuel)
 3. temple in Jerusalem
 - a. in Zion (Ps. 99:2a, see Special Topic: Zion)
 - b. His holy hill (Ps. 99:9b)
- C. Psalm 99:8 is a key theological verse. It reflects the twin, inseparable truths of
1. YHWH's merciful, longsuffering character
 2. human responsibility to hear and obey (cf. Exod. 34:6-7)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 99:1-5

¹The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble;
 He is enthroned *above* the cherubim, let the earth shake!
²The LORD is great in Zion,
 And He is exalted above all the peoples.
³Let them praise Your great and awesome name;
 Holy is He.
⁴The strength of the King loves justice;
 You have established equity;
 You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.
⁵Exalt the LORD our God
 And worship at His footstool;
 Holy is He.

99:1 “The LORD reigns” See notes at Ps. 96:10 and 97:1. All are PERFECTS, which speak of completed actions, but the timeframe of Hebrew VERBS must be determined from the context.

▣ **“let the peoples tremble”** This VERB (BDB 919, KB 1182, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) is parallel to “let the earth shake” (BDB 630, KB 680, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense; this word [BDB 630, KB 680] is found only here in the OT). Taken together, they form another universal emphasis. Here, it reflects YHWH's justice (cf. Ps. 99:4).

Both physical creation and human beings are affected by their Creator (cf. Exodus 19; Ps. 77:18; Rom. 8:18-25)!

▣ **“He is enthroned *above* the cherubim”** The VERB (BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) means “sits on His throne” (cf. 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kgs. 19:15; 1 Chr. 13:6; Ps. 80:1; Isa. 37:16). The mention of “the cherubim” (see Special Topic: *Cherubim*) identifies this phrase as referring to Exod. 25:22. The ark was the earthly place of YHWH's presence (i.e., “footstool,” Ps. 99:15b; 1 Chr. 28:2; the earth was called

YHWH's footstool in Isa. 66:1; the temple was called His footstool in Ps. 132:7; Lam. 2:1). He dwelt between the wings of the *cherubim* above the mercy seat (i.e., lid of the ark). This special place (i.e., above the ark in the Holy of Holies) was where heaven and earth, the visible and invisible realms, met!

SPECIAL TOPIC: Ark of the Covenant

99:2 “The LORD (YHWH) is great in Zion” This ADJECTIVE (BDB (BDB 152) is used often of YHWH.

1. His person – Deut. 7:21; Neh. 1:5; 8:6; 9:32; Ps. 86:10; 145:3; 147:5; Isa. 12:6; Jer. 10:6; 32:18; Dan. 9:4
2. His name – Jos. 7:9; 1 Sam. 12:22; 1 Kgs. 8:42; 2 Chr. 6:32; Ps. 76:1; 99:3; Jer. 10:6; 44:26; Ezek. 36:23; Mal. 1:11
3. His works – Deut. 11:7; Jdgs. 2:7; Ps. 111:2
4. His glory – Ps. 21:5; 138:5
5. His mercy (*hesed*) – 1 Kgs. 3:6; 2 Chr. 1:8; Ps. 57:10; 86:13; 108:4
6. His goodness – Neh. 9:25
7. His compassion – Isa. 54:7
8. greater than all gods – Exod. 18:11; Deut. 10:17; 1 Chr. 16:25; 2 Chr. 2:5; Ps. 77:13; 95:3; 96:4; 135:5

The NOUN (BDB 152) is also used of YHWH in Deut. 3:24; 5:24; 9:26; 11:2; 32:3; Ps. 105:2.

The AB suggests that the comparative PREPOSITION (KB 825, #1) in Ps. 99:2b suggests a possible comparative in 99:2a, which would denote YHWH's greatness over Israel/Judah, as it is over/above “all the peoples” (p. 368). It think this fits the parallel best. Israel was first, but not the only, one (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:16).

▣ **“He is exalted above all the peoples”** This phrase implies that YHWH is exalted (BDB 926, KB 1202, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) above the gods of the nations (i.e., their idols, cf. Ps. 97:9; 113:4; also note Exod. 18:11; Deut. 10:17; 1 Chr. 16:25; 2 Chr. 2:5; Ps. 77:13; 95:3; 96:4; 135:5).

99:3 “Let them praise Your great and awesome name” This is the third IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (cf. Ps. 99:1a,b).

For YHWH's “great name,” see the notes at Ps. 99:2.

YHWH's “awesome” name is from the VERB (BDB 431, KB 432, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) “to fear” or “awe.” It is used often of YHWH (cf. Deut. 7:21; 10:17,21; 28:58; Ps. 111:9; Mal. 1:14).

The words “great” and “awesome” are often used together to describe YHWH (cf. Neh. 1:5; 4:8; 9:32; Dan. 9:4).

The “them” refers to all non-Israelites (i.e., “peoples,” Ps. 99:1a; “the earth,” Ps. 99:1b; “all the peoples,” Ps. 99:2b).

▣ **“Holy is He”** Notice this is repeated in Ps. 99:5c and alluded to in 99:9c, which looks like a purposeful parallel. For “holy” see Special Topic: Holy.

99:4 I think this verse applies to YHWH Himself (see Contextual Insights A). Notice how His reign (Ps. 99:1) is characterized.

1. loves (BDB 12; KB 17, *Qal* PERFECT) justice (BDB 1048)
2. established (BDB 465, KB 464, *Polel* PERFECT) equity (lit. uprightness, BDB 449)
3. executed (BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* PERFECT) justice (BDB 1048) and righteousness (BDB 842, see Special Topic: Righteousness)

Notice they are all three PERFECTS, but NASB, NJB, and NKJV translate the first as PRESENT and the next two as PAST. The time element of Hebrew VERBS must be determined by context. So, do these describe who YHWH is or what He will do?

The terms “justice” and “righteousness” are often used together to designate the appropriate reign of kings.

1. YHWH Himself – Ps. 99:4; Is. 33:5; Jer. 4:2; 9:24
2. David – 1 Chr. 18:14
3. Solomon – 1 Kgs. 10:9; 2 Chr. 9:8
4. Judean kings – Jer. 22:3,15; Ezek. 45:9
5. Israeli kings – Amos 5:9,24
6. Messiah (i.e., line of David) – Isa. 9:7; 32:1,16; 59:9,14; Jer. 33:15

99:5 “Exalt the LORD our God” This is the first of two IMPERATIVES which close out the first strophe.

1. exalt – BDB 926, KB 1202, *Polel* IMPERATIVE, same VERB used in Ps. 99:2b
2. worship (lit. “bow down”) – BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishtaphel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 132:7

Notice how the full covenant title, “the LORD our God” (lit. YHWH *Elohim*, cf. Gen. 2:4; Exod. 20:2) is repeated three more times in Ps. 99:8a, 9a,c. YHWH is uniquely related to Abraham’s descendants.

1. in Zion, Ps. 99:2 (i.e., the temple)
2. in Jacob, Ps. 99:4c (i.e., Israel)
3. in Moses and Aaron, Ps. 99:6a (exodus and wilderness wandering period)
4. in Samuel, Ps. 99:6b (United Monarchy)
5. His law, Ps. 99:7b,c (Exodus 19-20)
6. His holy hill, Ps. 99:9b

▣ **“His footstool”** See note at Ps. 99:1b. The VERB “tremble” (BDB 919) is similar to the NOUN “footstool” (BDB 919). This may be an opening and closing sound play.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 99:6-9

**⁶Moses and Aaron were among His priests,
And Samuel was among those who called on His name;
They called upon the LORD and He answered them.
⁷He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud;
They kept His testimonies
And the statute that He gave them.
⁸O LORD our God, You answered them;
You were a forgiving God to them,
And yet an avenger of their evil deeds.
⁹Exalt the LORD our God
And worship at His holy hill,
For holy is the LORD our God.**

99:6-9 This strophe covers the period of the exodus, wilderness wanderings, conquest, and institution of the monarchy.

99:6 “those who called on His name” This would denote an act of worship in the temple/tabernacle (cf. Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:9-13; see Special Topic: What Does It Mean to “Receive,” “Believe,” “Confess/Profess,” and “Call Upon?”). In Jer. 33:3 it denotes prayer (i.e., personal relationship).

Notice they called and YHWH answered (Ps. 99:8a)!

99:7 “the pillar of cloud” This refers to the special cloud (“pillar,” BDB 765) representing YHWH’s personal presence that led and protected the Hebrew slaves as they left Egypt and wandered in the wilderness (cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19,24; 33:9,10; Deut. 1:33; Neh. 9:12,19; Ps. 78:14; 105:39).

This cloud/pillar disappeared after the Israelites crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Coming on the Clouds

▣ **“testimonies. . .statute”** See Special Topic: Terms for God’s Revelation.

▣ **“that He gave them”** This verse is about God’s revelation (i.e., “He spoke to them” . . . “He gave them”) and His peoples’ obedience to it (cf. Ps. 99:7b, i.e., “they kept”).

The “them” of Ps. 99:7 seems to refer to Moses (cf. Exod. 33:9) and Aaron (cf. Num. 12:4-8). It could also refer to all of Israel (cf. Exodus 19-20).

This is one of the central issues of Christianity/Judaism! How has the one true God revealed Himself

1. in creation
2. in promises
3. in actions
4. #1-3 recorded them in the OT
5. in His Son
6. #5 recorded them in the NT

SPECIAL TOPIC: Inspiration

SPECIAL TOPIC: Illumination

See the three video sermons online at www.freebiblecommentary.org in the Introductory Paragraph on the home page.

1. Why I Trust the OT
2. Why I Trust the NT
3. Is Christianity True?

99:8 “You did answer them” This relates to the issue of prayer. I have three Special Topics (see below) that address this issue. “Them” follows the use of “they” in Ps. 99:6. Both refer to the priestly prayers of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, the great intercessors of the OT (cf. Jer. 15:1).

1. Moses – Exod. 32:9-14,31-32; Num. 14:13-19; 21:7; Deut. 9:18-20,25-29; Ps. 106:23
2. Samuel – 1 Sam. 7:5,8-9; 12:19,23

SPECIAL TOPIC: Effective Prayer

SPECIAL TOPIC: Intercessory Prayer

SPECIAL TOPIC: Prayer, Unlimited Yet Limited

God's response took two forms.

1. forgiveness (i.e., Exod. 34:6-7; Num. 14:17-19; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 78:32; 86:15; 103:6-14)
2. avenger of their evil deeds (i.e., Exod. 32:28; Num. 20:12; Ps. 95:11; 107:12)

These go together because obedience (cf. Ps. 99:7b) is crucial. Judgment is both punitive (i.e., Exile) and redemptive (cf. Heb. 12:5-13). The NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 155, has a great statement, "forgiveness and vengeance, lawfulness and grace, love and wrath are not contradictions in YHWH." They reflect the tension of a grace covenant with demands for human response. For a full discussion of "retribution," see NIDOTTE, vol. 4, pp. 1140-1149.

99:9 The NKB has Ps. 99:9 as a separate strophe, and it may be because it switches to two IMPERATIVES directed to Israel.

1. exalt the LORD our God – BDB 926. LB 1202, *Polel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 99:5
2. worship at His holy hill (i.e., temple) – BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishtaphel*, cf. Ps. 99:5

However, notice the purposeful structure of strophe one, ending in these same IMPERATIVES (Ps. 99:5) and then strophe two, ending in the same IMPERATIVES. Remember, strophe divisions are not inspired. Often modern western people analyze this OT poetry in ways that reflect our culture and literary models, not ancient Hebrew and ANE models. This may especially be true of Ugarit models.

▣ **"For holy is the LORD our God"** A similar phrase closes Ps. 99:5.

There are some English versions that see the threefold repetition of this phrase (cf. Ps. 99:3,5,9) as the author's way of dividing his Psalm into three strophes (cf. NKJV, TEV); JPSOA has four (Ps. 99:1-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe the significance of the ark of the covenant.
2. Does this Psalm, like the previous ones, have a universal element?
3. Is Ps. 99:4 talking about an ideal Davidic king or YHWH Himself?
4. Why are Moses, Aaron, and Samuel mentioned in Ps. 99:6?
5. How can YHWH be both forgiving and avenging?

PSALM 100

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
All Men Exhorted to Praise God <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm for thanksgiving	A Song of Praise for the LORD'S Faithfulness to His People	Hymn Calling On All Nations to Praise the LORD	A Hymn of Praise	Invitation to Praise
100:1-3	100:1-3	100:1-2 100:3	100:1-2 100:3	100:1-2 100:3
100:4-5	100:4-5	100:4 100:5	100:4 100:5	100:4 100:5

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This brief Psalm has seven IMPERATIVES directed at YHWH's people.
 1. shout, Ps. 100:1 – BDB 929, KB 1206, *Hiphil* cf. Ps. 47:1; 95:1,2
 2. serve, Ps. 100:2 – BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal*, cf. Exod. 3:12; 4:23; Deut. 6:13; 1 Sam. 7:3; 1 Chr. 28:9
 3. come, Ps. 100:2 – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal*
 4. know (i.e., in the sense of “affirm in worship”), Ps. 100:3 – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal*
 5. enter, Ps. 100:4 – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal*, cf. Ps. 96:8
 6. give thanks, Ps. 100:4 – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil*
 7. bless, Ps. 100:4 – BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel*
- B. The only VERB (PERFECT) that is not an IMPERATIVE is in Ps. 100:3b, which describes YHWH's election and deliverance of Israel (i.e., Gen. 12:1-3; 15:12-21).
 1. He made us – Ps. 95:6; 119:73

2. Israel is His flock – Ps. 23:1; 74:1; 95:7; Isa. 40:11; Jer. 31:10; Ezek. 34:31 (also a Messianic reference, Ezek. 34:23; Micah 5:4; Zechariah 11; John 10:11,14-16)
- C. There is no VERBAL in Ps. 100:5. A “to be” VERB must be supplied. Psalm 3:b,c and 5 describe YHWH Himself and His redemptive activity.
- D. Some scholars (i.e., UBS *Handbook*, NASB Study Bible) believe this Psalm is the concluding doxology of the “kingship Psalms” (i.e., Psalm 93; 95-99). The term “king” is not used, but Ps. 100:3b-c may be an allusion to it.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 100:1-3

¹Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth.
²Serve the LORD with gladness;
Come before Him with joyful singing.
³Know that the LORD Himself is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

100:1 The Psalms regularly express a universal aspect of Israel’s God. He is the one true God, creator, sustainer, redeemer (cf. Psalm 33; 47; 98).

The USB *Handbook* (p. 852) suggests that “all the earth” should be understood with each of the poetic lines in Ps. 100:2-4.

100:2 In light of YHWH as the one and only God (see Special Topic: Monotheism) they

1. serve Him with gladness, cf. Deut. 12:11-12; 28:47
2. come before Him with joyful singing, cf. Ps. 66:1; 81:1; 95:2

Both of these IMPERATIVES (also Ps. 100:4) refer to temple worship.

▣ **“with joyful singing”** This FEMININE NOUN (BDB 943) refers to a shout of joy (i.e. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1128) or “cry of joy,” cf. Job 3:7; 20:5; Ps. 63:5.

100:3 “the LORD Himself is God” This is a recurrent theme of the uniqueness of YHWH (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 4:35,39; 1 Kgs. 18:39; Ps. 46:10).

▣ **“It is He who made us”** This refers to the call and promise (including the exodus, cf. Gen. 15:12-21) to Abraham and his descendants (see Contextual Insights, B).



NASB, NKJV,
 NJB, LXX,
 Peshitta “and not we ourselves”
 NKJV, TEV,
 JPSOA, REB,
 Vulgate “and we are His”

The first option follows the MT (*Kethiv*). The second is a suggestion made by the Masoretic scholars who compiled the MT (*Qere*). The UBS Text Project (p. 373) gives the *Qere* a “B” rating (some doubt).

The problem is whether “and not” is a PREPOSITION, “His” or a CONJUNCTION and a negative. Both would sound exactly alike when read.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 100:4-5

⁴Enter His gates with thanksgiving

***And* His courts with praise.**

Give thanks to Him, bless His name.

⁵For the LORD is good;

His lovingkindness is everlasting

And His faithfulness to all generations.

100:5 Notice how YHWH is characterized (see Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God).

1. good, cf. Ps. 106:1; 117:1; 118:1,29; Jer. 33:1,
2. merciful, see Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*)
3. everlasting, see Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*)
4. faithful, see Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT
5. to all through time
 - a. either Israel or
 - b. all humans who trust Him

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1. To whom is this Psalm addressed?
2. To what creative act is Ps. 100:3b referring?
3. List and define the main theological words in Ps. 100:5.

PSALM 101

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Psalmist's Profession of Uprightness <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David	Promised Faithfulness to the LORD	A King Pledges to Rule Justly	A King's Promise	The Ideal Ruler
101:1-5	101:1	101:1-2b	101:1-2b	101:1-2b
	101:2	101:2c-3b	101:2c-5	101:2c-3b
	101:3-4	101:3c-4		101:3c-4
	101:5	101:5		101:5
101:6-8	101:6-8	101:6	101:6	101:6
		101:7	101:7-8	101:7
		101:8		101:8

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The first strophe starts out with three COHORTATIVES (Ps. 101:1-2, i.e., *OT Parsing Guide*, p. 451).
 1. I will sing – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal*
 2. I will sing praises – BDB 274, KB 372, *Piel*
 3. I will give heed – BDB 968, KB 1328, *Hiphil*

The NASB continues the strophe through Ps. 101:5. There are several more “I will. . .” statements that function as COHORTATIVES.

 1. I will walk. . ., Ps. 101:2 – BDB 229, BK 246
 2. I will set. . ., Ps. 101:3 – BDB 1011, KB 1483, *Qal* IMPERFECT

3. I hate. . . , Ps. 101:3 – BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* PERFECT (but in a series of IMPERFECTS)
4. I will know. . . , Ps. 101:4 – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERFECT
5. I will destroy. . . , Ps. 101:5 – BDB 856, KB 1035, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
6. . . will I endure, Ps. 101:5 – BDB 407, KB 410, *Qal* IMPERFECT

Just a disclaimer, other scholars see these VERBS as referring to past action (AB, vol. 17A, p. 4). I think the first VERBS are what the psalmist will do when YHWH comes (Ps. 100:2b) because of his godly covenant obedience.

- B. This strophe (Ps. 101:1-5) functions as an affirmation of the psalmist's faith and faithfulness to YHWH and His revelation.
 1. he sings of YHWH's lovingkindness (i.e., *hesed*, see Special Topic: Lovingkindness [*hesed*]; because of Ps. 101:2-5, these first two may be a claim of the psalmist's faithfulness and fairness. These two NOUNS often describe YHWH. The King should reflect YHWH's character).
 2. he sings of YHWH's justice (see Special Topic: Judge, Judgment, Justice)
 3. he lives the blameless way
 - a. for "blameless," see Special Topic: Blameless, Innocent, Without Reproach
 - b. for "way," see online notes at Deut. 8:6 and 10:20; Ps. 1:1; for the related term "path" (BDB 73) see online note at Isa. 2:3
 4. he walks in integrity (BDB 1070) of heart
 5. he puts no worthless thing (BDB 116) before his eyes
 6. he hates those who swerve from the right (rare NOUN, used only twice in the OT, BDB 962, cf. Hosea 5:2)
 7. he does not allow their evil (i.e., #6) to cling to him
 8. he knows no evil
 9. he will destroy/silence those who secretly slander
 10. he will not endure those who have
 - a. a haughty look
 - b. an arrogant heart
- C. The second strophe continues the emphasis of Ps. 101:1-5. It describes the psalmist's godly lifestyle and rejection of evil.
 1. positive (Ps. 101:6)
 - a. he knows the faithful of the land
 - b. he desires that they dwell together
 - c. he allows those who live blameless lives (Ps. 101:6b) to minister/serve with him
 2. negative (Ps. 101:7-8)
 - a. he will not allow those who practice deceit to dwell with him
 - b. he will not allow those who speak falsehood to minister/serve him
 - c. he will continually destroy/silence the wicked of the land
 - d. he will cut off those who imply the psalmist is the "king"
- D. Notice how the opposite of faithful followers are characterized.
 1. idolaters, Ps. 101:3a
 2. apostates, Ps. 101:3b
 3. perverse heart, Ps. 101:4a
 4. secret slanders, Ps. 101:5a
 5. haughty look, Ps. 101:5b

6. arrogant heart, Ps. 101:5b
7. practice deceit, Ps. 101:7a
8. speaks falsehood, Ps. 101:7b
9. the wicked, Ps. 101:8a
10. those who do iniquity, Ps. 101:8b

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 101:1-5

¹I will sing of lovingkindness and justice,
 To You, O LORD, I will sing praises.
²I will give heed to the blameless way.
 When will You come to me?
 I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart.
³I will set no worthless thing before my eyes;
 I hate the work of those who fall away;
 It shall not fasten its grip on me.
⁴A perverse heart shall depart from me;
 I will know no evil.
⁵Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy;
 No one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure.

101:1 “lovingkindness and justice” For “lovingkindness” see Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*).
 For “justice” see Special Topic: Judge, Judgment, Justice.

▣ **“O LORD”** This is the covenant name for Israel’s Deity (YHWH). See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

101:2 “blameless” See Special Topic: Blameless, Innocent, Without Reproach.

▣ **“When will You come to me?”** This phrase is translated “when shall I attain it?” by JPSOA. The UBS Text Project (p. 373) supports the MT with a “B” rating (some doubt).

It reflects the OT, Mosaic, performance-based covenant. It is often called “the two ways” (cf. Psalm 1; Deut. 30:1,15-20; Jer. 17:5-8). It is a “Wisdom Literature” category designated by the terms

1. blessed (cf. Ps. 1:1; Matthew 7)
2. cursed (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28)
3. plant life, either fruitful or dying

Prosperity was viewed as a direct gift from God for obedience to the covenant, but problems were a direct result of sin (cf. Job; Psalm 73). This OT theological view must be modified by the NT’s revelation. God is with us and for us, based on who He is! Jesus comes for all, not just some. The OT focuses on the poor, alienated, and socially powerless as a theological way of asserting His love for all, not just the outwardly blessed! He has come in Christ! His love must be received by repentance, faith, obedience, service, and perseverance.

▣ **“within my house”** This phrase is ambiguous. It could refer to

1. the nations (cf. Ps. 101:7, i.e., psalmist as king)
2. a domestic area

3. a society

The psalmist is asserting either his current or past obedience to YHWH's covenant through Moses. Those described in Ps. 101:3 are those who knowingly violate the covenant repeatedly (IMPERFECT).

The word "house," BDB 108, is used of the king's palace in 1 Kgs. 4:6; 16:9; Isa. 22:15. This could support the view that the author was the king.

101:3 This verse describes an apostasy from the faith. The term translated "fall away" (BDB 962, KB 750) occurs only here and in Hosea 5:2. KB suggests "deviation" or "transgression" (LXX). This is a difficult concept but a repeated one in Scripture. See Special Topic: Apostasy. For most of Israel's history only a fraction of her people were faithful followers.

▣ **"worthless thing"** This NOUN (BDB 116) is the root from which the later title for Satan, *Belial*, is derived. Its basic meaning is "worthless," "good for nothing," "base." In this context it may refer to idolatry (AB, vol. 17A, p. 61).

See note from Deut. 13:13.

Deut. 13:13 "worthless men" Literally this means "sons of *Belial*" (BDB 116). The Hebrew word meant "worthless one" or "good for nothing" (cf. Jdgs. 19:22; 20:13; 1 Sam. 10:27; 30:22; 1 Kgs. 21:10,13; Pro. 6:12). By the NT time, *Belial* had become synonymous with Satan (cf. 2 Cor. 6:15). There is a theological development in Scripture where evil becomes personified.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Personal Evil

101:4 "evil" Evil (BDB 948 II), in this context, is conscious violation of YHWH's revealed will. Because evil people are addressed in Ps. 101:3b, 5a, 6, I think this also refers to an evil person (cf. NAB, New Berkeley version). See my notes from Deut. 30:15-20 online, www.freebiblecommentary.org.

101:5 "I will destroy" The VERB (BDB 856, KB 1035, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT [I believe, used in a COHORTATIVE sense]) means "exterminate," or "annihilate" in Hebrew, but in Arabic, it means "to silence" (cf. NJB). This connotation of the root fits this context best. It shows that secret lies/slander will be silenced (REB).

Justice will come one day! It has come in Christ (cf. Matt. 3:2; 4:17) and will be consummated one day over all the earth (cf. Matt. 6:10; John 14:1-3; Rev. 11:15).

▣ **"will I endure"** The MT (BDB 407, KB 410, *Qal* IMPERFECT) consonants, יכל, are interpreted by the LXX as אכל (BDB 37). This emendation is not supported by any major English translation, except the NEB, but it is not followed by the REB. "Endure" or "tolerate" parallels "destroy" or "silence."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 101:6-8

⁶My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me;

He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me.

⁷He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house;

He who speaks falsehood shall not maintain his position before me.

⁸Every morning I will destroy all the wicked of the land,

So as to cut off from the city of the LORD all those who do iniquity.

101:6 Several English translations make both Ps. 101:5 and 6 separate strophes (NRSV, NJB). This is possibly because Ps. 101:3-4, 5 (and 7) describe who the king will not accept, while Ps. 101:6 describes those he will accept. These are the kinds of faithful followers who are like the king himself (cf. Ps. 101:1-2).

101:7 “before me” This CONSTRUCT of BDB 617 and BDB 744 is repeated from Ps. 101:3a. This phrase is parallel to “within my house,” which is another reason to see this Psalm as authored by the king.

101:8 This verse seems to have an eschatological orientation.

1. every morning (i.e., coming of light; or simply the time the king held court, cf. 2 Sam. 15:2)
2. the land (i.e., has several possible connotations, see Special Topic: Land, Country, Earth)
3. the city of the Lord (see Revelation 21-22, where it becomes imagery of all the people of God, i.e., “the holy city, new Jerusalem”)
4. cut off. . .all those who do iniquity (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15; 21:8,27)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Is this a royal Psalm? Why or why not?
2. Does Ps. 101:1 describe YHWH or the king?
3. Why is Ps. 101:2b so difficult to interpret?
4. Does Ps. 101:3 refer to idolatry?
5. Is Ps. 101:8 eschatological or ideal?

PSALM 102

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer of an Afflicted Man for Mercy on Himself and Zion <u>MT Intro</u> A Prayer of the Afflicted, when he is faint, and pours out his complaint before the Lord	The LORD'S Eternal Love	Prayer for Healing in Sickness	The Prayer of a Troubled Youth	Prayer In Misfortune
102:1-7	102:1-2 102:3-7	102:1-2 102:3-11	102:1-2 102:3-8	102:1-2 102:3-5 102:6-8
102:8-11	102:8-11		102:9-11	102:9-11
102:12-17	102:12-17	102:12-17	102:12-17	102:12-14 102:15-17
102:18-22	102:18-22	102:18-22	102:18-22	102:18-22
102:23-28	102:23-28	102:23-24 102:25-28	102:23-28	102:23-24 102:25-27 102:28

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 102:1-7

¹Hear my prayer, O LORD!

And let my cry for help come to You.

²Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my distress;

Incline Your ear to me;

In the day when I call answer me quickly.

³For my days have been consumed in smoke,

And my bones have been scorched like a hearth.

⁴My heart has been smitten like grass and has withered away,

Indeed, I forget to eat my bread.

⁵Because of the loudness of my groaning

My bones cling to my flesh.

⁶I resemble a pelican of the wilderness;

I have become like an owl of the waste places.

⁷I lie awake,

I have become like a lonely bird on a housetop.

102:1-7 This strophe describes the psalmist's situation (i.e., "the day of my distress," Ps. 102:2,23-26).

1. feels YHWH has hidden His face (i.e., no sense of His presence)
2. his days are consumed in smoke, Ps. 102:3
3. his bones have been scorched, Ps. 102:3
4. his heart has been smitten, Ps. 102:4
5. he has forgotten to eat because of his loud groaning, Ps. 102:4b-5a
6. his bones cling to his flesh, Ps. 103:5b
7. he looks like a bird of the wilderness, Ps. 102:6,7b
8. he cannot sleep, Ps. 102:7a

It is possible that what looks like physical illness is really a person grieving over exile and the loss of the temple (cf. Ps. 102:14,18-22,23-28).

102:1-2 The Psalm opens with a series of prayer requests.

1. hear my prayer – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 17:6; 39:12; 54:2; 55:1; 61:1; 64:1; 143:1
2. let my cry for help come to You – BDB 9, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. do not hide Your face from me – BDB 711, KB 771, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE, cf. Ps. 27:9; 69:17; 143:7
4. incline Your ear to me – BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 17:6; 31:2; 71:2; 86:1; 88:2
5. quickly – BDB 554, KB 553, *Piel* IMPERATIVE (lit. "be quick," see NJB, most English translations translate it as an ADVERB [BDB 555])
6. answer me – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

102:2 "Your face" This is a Hebrew idiom for the personal presence of YHWH (cf. Ps. 10:11; 13:1; 27:9; 30:7; 44:24; 51:9; 69:17; 80:3,7,19; 88:14; 143:7).

▣ “**day**” This imagery (BDB 398) is repeated three times.

1. in the day of my distress, Ps. 102:2a
2. in the day when I call, Ps. 102:2c
3. my days, Ps. 102:3a
4. all day long, Ps. 102:8a
5. my days, Ps. 102:11

SPECIAL TOPIC: Day (*yom*)

▣ “**Your ear**” This is anthropomorphic imagery. See Special Topic: God Described as Human.

102:6 “pelican. . .owl” Often in the OT, birds and wild animals are used to denote not only abandoned places, but the presence of the demonic (i.e., Isa. 13:19-22; 34:11-15; Zeph. 2:14). Here the focus is on the element of abandonment or aloneness.

Also note the birds mentioned are Levitically unclean (cf. Lev. 11:13-19), which is another way to assert the sense of rejection!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 102:8-11

⁸**My enemies have reproached me all day long;
Those who deride me have used my *name* as a curse.**
⁹**For I have eaten ashes like bread
And mingled my drink with weeping**
¹⁰**Because of Your indignation and Your wrath,
For You have lifted me up and cast me away.**
¹¹**My days are like a lengthened shadow,
And I wither away like grass.**

102:8-11 This strophe continues the description of the hurting psalmist.

1. his enemies (possibly invaders) reproach him continuously, Ps. 102:8
2. his enemies deride him
3. his enemies use his name as a curse (cf. Isa. 65:15; Jer. 29:22)
- 4-5. he has eaten ashes and drunk tears (these were signs of mourning, see Special Topic: Grieving Rites, cf. Ps. 42:3; 80:5)
6. his days are like a lengthened shadow (i.e., his pain lasts a long time)
7. he withers away like grass (cf. Gen. 6:3; Job 10:4; 14:1-2; Ps. 78:39; 90:5-6; 102:4; 103:15-18; Isa. 40:6; 1 Pet. 1:24-25)

The theological issue is why was he suffering. Psalm 102:10 reveals that he was experiencing divine judgment (cf. Psalm 38). One wonders if he is a symbol or representative of the nation (cf. Ps. 102:12-17, 18-22).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 102:12-17

¹²**But You, O LORD, abide forever,
And Your name to all generations.**
¹³**You will arise *and* have compassion on Zion;
For it is time to be gracious to her,**

For the appointed time has come.

**¹⁴Surely Your servants find pleasure in her stones
And feel pity for her dust.**

**¹⁵So the nations will fear the name of the LORD
And all the kings of the earth Your glory.**

**¹⁶For the LORD has built up Zion;
He has appeared in His glory.**

**¹⁷He has regarded the prayer of the destitute
And has not despised their prayer.**

102:12-17 This strophe has a national emphasis. YHWH has an international purpose for Israel. See Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan.

Notice the things the psalmist asserts about YHWH.

1. He sits enthroned forever (cf. Ps. 9:7; 10:16; 29:10; Lam. 5:19)
2. His name (lit. "remembrance," BDB 271, cf. Ps. 30:4; 97:12) abides to all generations (cf. Exod. 3:15; Ps. 135:13)
3. He acts in grace toward His covenant people
4. He has built up Zion
5. He has appeared (i.e., to Zion) in His glory
6. He regards the prayers of the destitute (BDB 792, occurs only here and Jer. 17:6, where it is used of a tree/scrub; the root comes from the VERB, "to strip bare")

The psalmist asks YHWH to act on Israel's behalf for His greater purpose!

102:13 "You will arise" This VERB (BDB 877, KB 1086) has a wide semantic field. It could denote

1. YHWH rising from His throne to act (cf. Ps. 119:126)
2. YHWH awaking from sleep (metaphor for His lack of action)
3. YHWH becoming active after a period of purposeful inactivity

▣ **"the appointed time has come"** The NOUN (BDB 417) has the connotation of "an appointed time" (cf. Ps. 75:2; Dan. 8:19). The concept that YHWH is in control of time, space, history is central to the character of the one true God (cf. Ecclesiastes 3).

102:14-17 These verses imply the destruction of the temple.

1. the nations (i.e., who did this) will fear, Ps. 102:15
2. YHWH will build up Zion and show her His glory, Ps. 102:16
3. the prayers of the destitute (i.e., the exiled people of God) will be heard
4. note Ps. 102:18-22

102:14 "Surely Your servants find pleasure in her stones" This phrase reminds me of the deep emotional attachment that modern Judaism has for the wailing wall in Jerusalem (i.e., the foundation stones of Solomon's temple). Judaism (i.e., the Mosaic Law) is linked to a special place of worship (i.e., the tabernacle, later the temple in Jerusalem).

▣ **"her dust"** This NOUN (BDB 779) is often used of the debris of destroyed cities (cf. 1 Kgs. 20:10; Neh. 4:2,10; Ezek. 26:4,12).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 102:18-22

¹⁸This will be written for the generation to come,
That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.
¹⁹For He looked down from His holy height;
From heaven the LORD gazed upon the earth,
²⁰To hear the groaning of the prisoner,
To set free those who were doomed to death,
²¹That *men* may tell of the name of the LORD in Zion
And His praise in Jerusalem,
²²When the peoples are gathered together,
And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

102:18-22 This strophe is a promise about YHWH's restoration of His covenant people to Judah and her temple.

Hebrews 1 quotes Ps. 102:25-27 as relating to Jesus. In this sense Ps. 102:28 relates to the new people of God (i.e., believing Jews and Gentiles, cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6; Gal. 3:7-9,13-14,29; 6:15-16)!

102:19 YHWH knows what is happening on earth (cf. Job 28:24; Ps. 14:2; 33:13-14; 53:3; 80:14; Lam. 3:50; 5:1; see full note at Ps. 33:13-17). The term "earth" (BDB 75) can have several meanings, see Special Topic: Land, Country, Earth.

▣ **"from His holy height. . .from heaven"** These are parallel. The first might refer to the temple on Mt. Moriah, but when both are taken into account, it refers to YHWH's dwelling place above the atmosphere of the earth.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Heaven

SPECIAL TOPIC: Heaven and the Third Heaven

102:20 These images refer to exiled Judeans (and possibly Israelites).

102:22 This, like so many Psalms in Book IV, has a universal emphasis (see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan). The phrase, "the kingdom will serve the LORD," reminds me of Rev. 5:9-14 and 11:15!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 102:23-28

²³He has weakened my strength in the way;
He has shortened my days.
²⁴I say, "O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days,
Your years are throughout all generations.
²⁵Of old You founded the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.
²⁶Even they will perish, but You endure;
And all of them will wear out like a garment;

Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.

²⁷But You are the same,

And Your years will not come to an end.

²⁸The children of Your servants will continue,

And their descendants will be established before You.”

102:23-28 This strophe, like the two previous ones, uses personal imagery in a national sense. It affirms YHWH's act of creation (Ps. 102:26); He is eternal (102:27)! His people have gone through a devastating time (defeat, destruction, exile), but He will restore them (102:28) because as “heaven and earth” are the work of His hands (cf. Ps. 8:6; 19:1; Isa. 45:12; 48:13), so too, the covenant people (cf. Ps. 138:8; 143:5; Isa. 45:11; 60:2; 64:8; even Assyria, Isa. 19:25).

102:23-24 The LXX translates these verses as YHWH speaking to the psalmist. The NT book of Hebrews 1:10-12 quotes Ps. 102:25-27 as referring to Jesus. The MT translates the same Hebrew consonants in a different way (cf. *Tyndale OT Commentaries*, vol. 16, Psalms 73-150, pp. 395-396).

102:23 “strength” The term (BDB 470) was used of national strength being affected by YHWH's judgment (cf. Lev. 26:20; Lam. 1:6,14; Amos 2:14).

102:25-27 These verses from the LXX are quoted in Heb. 1:10-11, where they are applied to Jesus (cf. Heb. 13:8).

102:27 “But You are the same” YHWH does not change nor do His purposes (cf. Ps. 33:11; Mal. 3:6; James 1:17). Psalm 102:27 is a dramatic contrast to 102:26. Even heaven and earth will pass away (cf. Isa. 34:4; 51:6; Matt. 5:18; 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 20:11), but not YHWH!

For a good brief discussion of God's unchangeableness see Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed., pp. 304-308.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Is this Psalm about an individual or the nation of Israel?
2. Explain the imagery of Ps. 102:6-7.
3. Does Ps. 102:14 imply a reference to the destruction of the temple?
4. Does the universal emphasis of Ps. 102:15,22 refer to restoration from exile or an eschatological setting?
5. Are heaven and earth permanent or transitory?
6. How is Ps. 102:28 related to
 - a. Gen. 12:1-3
 - b. Rom. 2:28-29

PSALM 103

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Praise for the LORD'S Mercies <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David	Praise for the LORD'S Mercies	Thanksgiving for Recovery from Sickness	The Love of God	God Is Love
103:1-5	103:1-5	103:1-5	103:1-5	103:1-2 103:3-5
103:6-14	103:6-10 103:11-14	103:6-14	103:6-14	103:6-7 103:8-10 103:11-12 103:13-14
103:15-18	103:15-18	103:15-18	103:15-18	103:15-16 103:17-18
103:19-22	103:19 103:20-22	103:19-22	103:19-22	103:19-20 103:21-22

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is one of the highwater marks of praise in the Psalter. It is a companion to Psalm 104. Psalm 103 focuses on God as merciful Redeemer (YHWH, Ps. 103:1,6,8,13,17,19,20,21,22 [twice]), while Psalm 104 focuses on God's creative power (*Elohim*, Ps. 104:1,33).

- B. This Psalm seems to move from (1) personal experience (2) to corporate worship (3) to cosmic worship.
- C. Brief Outline
 - 1. Praise to God for His love to individuals, Ps. 103:1-5
 - 2. Praise to God for His love to Israel, Ps. 103:6-14
 - 3. Praise to God for His infinite love to finite man, Ps. 103:15-18
 - 4. Let everything praise the Lord, Ps. 103:19-22

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 103:1-5

¹Bless the LORD, O my soul,
 And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name.
²Bless the LORD, O my soul,
 And forget none of His benefits;
³Who pardons all your iniquities,
 Who heals all your diseases;
⁴Who redeems your life from the pit,
 Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;
⁵Who satisfies your years with good things,
 So *that* your youth is renewed like the eagle.

103:1-2,20-22 “Bless the LORD” When one compares the first and last verses of this Psalm and Ps. 104:1,35, it is obvious that they form a unity (six *Piel* IMPERATIVES).

▣ **“Bless”** This term (BDB 138, KB 159) is one of two roots used of blessings.

1. אָשַׁר (BDB 80) is used 45 times in the OT and corresponds to the “bless” of Matt. 5:3-10 (i.e., the Beatitudes). It denotes a state of blessedness (cf. Ps. 1:1; 2:12; 32:1,2; 33:12; 34:8; 40:4; etc.).
2. בָּרַךְ (BDB 138) is used here (cf. Ps. 103:1,2,20,21,21; 104:1,35) and over 325 times in the OT. It was used of
 - a. YHWH blessing initial creation – Gen. 1:22, 28
 - b. YHWH blessing the Patriarchs – Gen. 12:1; 18:18; 22:17-18; 26:4; 28:14
 - c. the cursing and blessing of covenant obedience – Deuteronomy 27-28 (also note Leviticus 26)

The basic root has two (possibly related) connotations.

- a. to kneel
- b. to bless

103:1 “soul” *Nephesh* (BDB 659, KB 711-713) is the Hebrew term for “life force.” It is used for both mankind (Gen. 2:7) and the animals (cf. Gen. 1:24; 2:19). Here, it is parallel with the next phrase, “all that is within me,” which emphasizes the author’s attempt to praise God with his whole being. See note online at Ps. 3:2.

▣ **“O my soul”** This is a literary form where the author speaks to himself (cf. Ps. 42:5,11; 43:5; 104:1,35; 116:7). It is a way of referring to one’s own thinking process.

▣ **“His holy name”** The rest of this Psalm, particularly Ps. 103:8-14, describes the character of God. This Psalm helps us to get a true picture of the heart and mind of the eternal, creator, redeemer God. See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God.

103:2 “And forget none of His benefits” In the OT, for God to forget is very important because it speaks of His pardon. But for a person to forget speaks of his ingratitude or rebellion. A good parallel passage for God’s tender mercy toward fallen man is seen in Deut. 4:9,23,31; 6:12; 8:11,14,19; 9:7; 25:19. Just to sit and reflect on who God is and what He has done for us brings joy to the heart of a true believer.

103:3 “Who pardons all your iniquities” The term (BDB 699, KB 757) for “pardons” is used in Hebrew only for God’s forgiveness. Psalm 103:11-13 includes three metaphors that describe God’s forgiveness in graphic terms.

▣ Notice the series of PARTICIPLES that describe why YHWH should be blessed (i.e., He gives benefits).

1. He pardons all your iniquities – BDB 699, KB 757, *Qal*
2. He heals all your diseases – BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal*
3. He redeems your life from the pit – BDB 145, KB 169, *Qal*
4. He crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion – BDB 742, KB 815, *Piel*
5. He satisfies your years with good things – BDB 959, KB 1302, *Hiphil*

This series of five PARTICIPLES covers life on earth and a future life in heaven.

▣ **“Who heals all your diseases”** The Hebrew NOUN, “diseases” (BDB 316), and VERB (BDB 317 I) are used in Deut. 29:21 in the sense of cursing because of Israel’s disobedience to the covenant. Because of this usage, and several OT passages that speak of healing of sin (cf. Ps. 41:4; Isa. 1:6; 6:10; 53:5), it is doubtful that the emphasis of this verse is on physical healing, although it surely includes that (cf. Exod. 15:26; Deut. 32:29; Ps. 147:3). The Jews recognized that sin and disease were related (cf. James 5:13-18). Here, it is parallel to “pardons all your iniquities.”

SPECIAL TOPIC: Healing

103:4 “Who redeems your life” The term “redeems” (BDB 145, KB 169, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) is the same as “the kinsman redeemer” or *go’el* (BDB 145, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. Job 19:25 and also the same root in Ruth 4). Here, God is described in intimate family terms, as He is in Ps. 103:13.

▣ **“from the pit”** This could be used in the sense of physical destruction, but because of its parallel in relationship to the term *Sheol* in Ps. 16:10, it seems to relate to the author’s hope in the afterlife (see Special Topic: Where Are the Dead?). Some authors even connect Ps. 103:4b and 5 to this context.

▣ **“Who crowns you with lovingkindness”** The VERB (BDB 742, KB 815) can mean

1. crown – LXX and most English translations
2. surround – JPSOA, NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 384

Both make sense in this context.

▣ **“compassion”** The term (BDB 933) is often used of YHWH (cf. Exod. 33:19; Deut. 13:17; 30:3; 2 Kgs. 13:23; Isa. 14:1; 30:18; 49:10,13; 54:8,10; 55:7; 60:10). It was used in Ps. 102:14 to describe the exiles’ feelings about the destroyed temple (cf. Lam. 3:22).

▣ **“Who satisfies your years with good things”** This is a very difficult verse to translate because of the uncertainty of the Hebrew term, “years.” Literally, it means “ornaments” (BDB 725). The King James translation, “mouth,” is obviously incorrect. The ASV translation, along with the Septuagint, and the Vulgate, have “desire,” which seems to be a derived meaning from the original term, while most modern translations use a textual emendation to bring forth the concept of life or prime of life (cf. NEB, RSV, TEB and JPSOA). The AB (Michael Dahood, p. 26) sees it as referring to eternity (i.e., life with God in heaven). The UBS Text Project gives “ornaments” a “B” rating (some doubt).

▣ **“so that your youth is renewed like the eagle”** The concept of “eagle” has caused some commentators to take this verse in two different ways.

1. actually refers to the vigorous strength of eagles (cf. Isa. 40:31)
2. the mythical allusion to the phoenix, a bird which comes back to life after death (cf. RSV translation; possibly Job 29:18)
3. eagles molting so as to get new feathers (NET Bible)

The term translated “eagle” (BDB 676) can refer to an eagle or a vulture. In this context of YHWH’s mercy and grace, “eagle” is the better choice (note Exod. 19:4; Deut. 32:11; Isa. 40:31).

The VERB “renewed” (BDB 293, KB 293) is rare (cf. 1 Sam. 11:14; 2 Chr. 15:8; 24:4,12; Job 10:17; Isa. 61:4; Lam. 5:21). It is used only three times in the Psalter.

1. Ps. 51:10 – renew a steadfast spirit within me (*Piel* IMPERFECT)
2. Ps. 103:5 – renewed like an eagle (*Hithpael* IMPERFECT)
3. Ps. 104:30 – You renew the face of the ground (*Piel* IMPERFECT)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 103:6-14

**⁶The LORD performs righteous deeds
And judgments for all who are oppressed.
⁷He made known His ways to Moses,
His acts to the sons of Israel.
⁸The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.
⁹He will not always strive *with us*,
Nor will He keep *His anger* forever.
¹⁰He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.
¹²As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
¹³Just as a father has compassion on *his* children,
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.
¹⁴For He Himself knows our frame;
He is mindful that we are *but* dust.**

103:6,7 “The LORD performs righteous deeds” The term “righteous deeds” is used two ways in the OT.

1. to describe God’s holiness
2. to describe God’s acts of salvation

It seems that in these two verses we have a description of the events of the exodus and of the wilderness wanderings. Therefore, this is a threefold thanksgiving for God's act of grace in

1. deliverance from Egypt
2. in revealing Himself to Moses
3. patience with the people during the wandering in the wilderness

▣ **“And judgments for all who are oppressed”** There are two ways to interpret texts such as this one.

1. God cares for the weak, poor, and powerless (i.e., Exod. 22:22-24; Deut. 10:17-19; Ps. 68:5).
2. Since the OT saw prosperity as a sign of God's favor, often the logical conclusion was He had rejected the others because of their sins (i.e., Job, Psalm 73), but it is possible to see God's repeatedly stated love for them as a literary way of showing/affirming His love and care for all!

103:7 “He made His ways known to Moses” YHWH revealed Himself to Moses, cf. Exodus 19-20; 33:13; Ps. 99:7. The OT is inspired, eternal revelation (cf. Matt. 5:17-19), but it must be remembered that Jesus is the ultimate revelation (cf. Matt. 5:21-48). He is the only proper interpreter of Scripture. He is lord of Scripture! Mosaic revelation still functions in sanctification but not in justification.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Paul's View of the Mosaic Law

SPECIAL TOPIC: Inspiration

SPECIAL TOPIC: Illumination

▣ **“His ways”** This is one of several terms used to describe YHWH's revelation. See Special Topic: Terms for God's Revelation.

103:8 “The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness”

This is the first phrase in a series to describe the nature of God. It seems to be an allusion to Exod. 34:6,7. These attributes of God are affirmed again and again in Scripture (cf. Num. 14:18; Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel's God.

103:9 “He will not always strive *with us*” When one reads this in English it seems to imply that God will not always have patience with fallen humanity, but it is a Hebrew idiom for exactly the opposite! He will always have patience with His special creation (cf. Gen. 6:3; Isa. 57:16).

▣ The term “strive” (BDB 936, KB 1224, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is a term that refers to legal charges (cf. Jer. 3:5,12). God's heart is always willing to turn back to us when we turn to Him (cf. James 4:8)!

103:10 “He has not dealt with us according to our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities”

Faithful followers are not punished in relation to their sin nor rewarded on the basis of their efforts. This verse obviously continues the thought of Ps. 103:9, and Israel knew the truth of it well.

103:11 “For as high as the heavens are above the earth” This is the first of three metaphors to describe the boundless grace of God. For “heavens” see Special Topic: Heaven and Special Topic: Heaven and the Third Heaven. Note the parallel in Isa. 55:9.

▣ **“those who fear Him”** The VERB (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) denotes “respect,” “awe.” This phrase is a recurrent title for faithful followers (cf. Ps. 15:4; 25:12,14; 103:13; 118:4). See Special Topic: Fear (OT),

103:12 “As far as the east is from the west” The Hebrew etymological roots of “east” and “west” refer to the rising and setting sun. As the height of the heavens cannot compare with God’s grace, so, the expanse of the earth from horizon to horizon cannot compare with God’s grace. When one compares this with Isa. 38:17; 44:22; and Micah 7:19, the full metaphorical impact of the grace of God is overwhelming!

▣ **“So far has He removed our transgressions from us”** The term “remove” (BDB 934, KB 1221) signifies “no relationship with,” which illustrates the complete removal of the penalty and guilt of sin by a gracious God.

This is OT justification by grace! When God forgives (because of who He is), He forgets (cf. Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19)! Our past is forgiven and forgotten. Now we must live godly lives into the future. Many believers can intellectually affirm the forgiveness of God, but they have never embraced the forgetfulness of God!

Notice that in Ps. 103:12-13 there are two words that begin with נ, and these appear twice. This is an obvious sound play (as is the threefold א sound in Ps. 103:10 and 11).

103:13 “Just as a father has compassion on his children” Here again is another family metaphor to describe God’s love (cf. Exod. 4:22; Deut. 1:31; 8:5; Ps. 27:10; Pro. 3:12; Isa. 49:15; 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 31:9; Hos. 11:1; Mal. 1:6). This is the possible origin of Jesus’ term to describe God as Father (see Special Topic: Father and Special Topic: The fatherhood of God).

This verse was used in Judaism on the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16). It was quoted when one of the two scapegoats was pushed over the cliff (i.e., bore sin away from the camp).

▣ **“So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him”** It must be remembered that, although God’s initiating grace is key in biblical faith, He demands a response be made by humankind in an initial and ongoing way (cf. Ps. 103:17,18 for a threefold emphasis on this conditional aspect of mankind’s part).

The VERB “fear” (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) denotes those who revere God by faith and faithfulness. See full note on the positive and negative aspects of “fear” at Ps. 15:2-5. See Special Topic: Fear (OT).

103:14 “He Himself knows our frame” This is the Hebrew term *yetzer* (BDB 428), which means “intent.” God knows our thoughts and yet still loves us (cf. Gen. 6:5; 8:21). It is interesting that generally the rabbis did not believe in original sin (Genesis 3), but held to the theory of the two *yetzers* (i.e., good intent and evil intent). They said that every person has a black dog and white dog inside them and the one fed the most becomes the bigger and stronger. This is an emphasis on human responsibility, which is certainly a half truth (see Special Topic: Election/Predestination and the Need for a Theological Balance).

The NRSV and JPSOA see the VERB in Ps. 103:4a as referring to the creation of Adam (Gen. 2:7; 3:19) or to all humans (Ps. 139:15). The TEV and NJB assume it refers to what humans are made of (i.e., clay, dust).

▣ **“He is mindful that we are but dust”** This metaphor implies initial creation (cf. Gen. 2:7; 3:19; Job 34:15 Ps. 104:29; Eccl. 3:20; 12:7). It speaks of humanity’s frailty (cf. Job 10:9; Ps. 78:39), which introduces the next section, Ps. 103:15-18.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 103:15-18

¹⁵**As for man, his days are like grass;**

As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

¹⁶**When the wind has passed over it, it is no more,**

And its place acknowledges it no longer.

¹⁷**But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him,**

And His righteousness to children's children,

¹⁸**To those who keep His covenant**

And remember His precepts to do them.

103:15,16 “As for man, his days are like grass” This strophe (Ps. 103:15-18) is an emphasis on the eternality of God and the insignificant finitude of mankind. This same metaphor is used several times in the OT (cf. Job 14:1,2; Ps. 90:5,6; Isa. 40:6-8), and in the NT (cf. 1 Pet. 1:24-25).

103:17-18 These verses contain a threefold series which describes mankind's need to respond to God's initiating love (i.e., human freewill).

1. Ps. 103:17, those who fear Him
2. Ps. 103:18, those who keep His covenant
3. Ps. 103:18, those who remember His precepts to do them

103:17 “the lovingkindness of the LORD” This refers to His covenant faithfulness. See Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*).

▣ **“from everlasting to everlasting”** This is the doubling of *'olam* (BDB 761, cf. Ps. 90:2). See Special Topic: Forever (*'olam*).

▣ **“And His righteousness to children's children”** We learn from parts of the Pentateuch that God visits the iniquity of the father on the children to the third and fourth generation (cf. Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9). However, for those who love Him He visits His blessings to the thousandth generation (cf. Deut. 5:10; 7:9)! Faith and faithfulness in YHWH moves through families (cf. Deut. 4:9; 6:7,20-25; 11:19; 32:46), as do sin and rebellion.

103:18 “to do them” Obedience is crucial to the covenant. The sovereign God initiates it and sets limits but demands that His people obey (see Special Topic: Keep; cf. Deut. 4:2,6,9,40; 5:10,12,29,32; 6:2,3,17,25; 7:8,9,11,12). This concept of hearing God's word and then obeying it is the Hebrew word *Shema* (BDB 1033, cf. Deut. 4:1; 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3; 27:10; 33:7). Jesus made this same point in Luke 6:46!

▣ **“covenant”** See Special Topic: Covenant.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 103:19-22

¹⁹**The LORD has established His throne in the heavens,**

And His sovereignty rules over all.

²⁰**Bless the LORD, you His angels,**

Mighty in strength, who perform His word,

Obeing the voice of His word!

²¹**Bless the LORD, all you His hosts,
You who serve Him, doing His will.**

²²**Bless the LORD, all you works of His,
In all places of His dominion;
Bless the LORD, O my soul!**

103:19 “His sovereignty rules over all” The term “all” is a reference to the praise due God by the cosmos. He made it; it praises Him, both animate and inanimate.

103:20 “Bless the LORD, you His angels” This describes the personal, conscious servants of God. There has been some discussion about the term, “His hosts” (BDB 838) in Ps. 103:21, which some see as other groups of angels. The term does usually mean “army.” However, because of the inanimate praise of Ps. 103:22, others have seen “His host” as referring to the starry heavens (cf. Deut. 4:19; Ps. 19:1-6).

Notice that as faithful followers must obey YHWH, so too, the angels must obey (cf. Heb. 1:6-14).

103:22 All nature, animals, humans, and angels praise God (cf. Phil. 2:9-11). Blessing and praise are due the Creator (Psalm 104) and Redeemer (Psalm 103) of all! I can hardly wait to be a part of this great choir (cf. Rev. 5:9-14)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the central truth of this Psalm?
2. How is this Psalm related to Psalm 104?
3. Is healing a specific promise in the atonement of Christ? (cf. Isa. 53:5)
4. Is the covenant conditional or unconditional? Explain.

PSALM 104

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD'S Care Over All His Works <u>No MT Intro</u>	Praise the Sovereign LORD for His Creation and Providence	Hymn to God the Creator	In Praise of the Creator	The Glories of Creation
104:1-4	104:1-2	104:1-4	104:1-4	104:1-2a 104:2b-4
	104:3-4			
104:5-9	104:5-9	104:5-9	104:5-9	104:5-6 104:7-9
104:10-13	104:10-13	104:10-13	104:10-12 104:13-15	104:10-12 104:13-15
104:14-17	104:14-18	104:14-23	104:16-18	104:16-18
104:18-23	104:19-23		104:19-23	104:19-21 104:22-23
104:24-26	104:24-26	104:24-26	104:24-26	104:24 104:25-26
104:27-30	104:27-30	104:27-30	104:27-30	104:27-28 104:29-30
104:31-35	104:31-32 104:33-35b 104:35c-d	104:31-35	104:31-32 104:33-35b 104:35c-d	104:31-32 104:33-35b 104:35c

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. It is obvious that Psalm 103 and 104 form a theological pair. This can be seen as the opening and closing verses are exactly alike (“bless,” *Piel* IMPERATIVE). The significance of this pairing may be in the two general subject matters of these Psalms. Psalm 103 is the covenant love of YHWH as Redeemer and Psalm 104 shows God (*Elohim*) as the Creator. The names for God reflected in the opening of both of these Psalms are YHWH, the covenant name for God, and *Elohim*, the general name for God. The Jews say that Psalm 103 describes YHWH in His covenant mercy and Psalm 104 describes *Elohim* as Creator. This is a much better explanation of these terms than to see in them the JEDP theory of source criticism that was so popular in the 19th century (see Introduction to Genesis online at www.freebiblecommentary.org).
- B. This Psalm is very similar to the Egyptian hymn to *Aton* (ANET 369-371), by Akhenaten IV (1375-1357 B.C.). Although there is a similarity, there are also obvious differences. We know that Wisdom Literature was shared among many cultures in the ANE, and there may be a purposeful similarity between the Egyptian hymn to the sun god and the Creator Redeemer God in Psalm 103 and 104. For the ANE parallels see
1. The IVP *Bible Background Commentary*, pp. 548-550
 2. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 277-278
 3. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp.239-240
 4. *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the OT*, pp. 165-199
- C. It is somewhat strange that the conscious creation of God (cf. Phil. 2:10), both the angels and humans, is somewhat de-emphasized in Psalm 104. As a matter of fact, the Hebrew text of Ps. 104:4 seems to refer simply to the elements of nature and not the angelic world. Humanity is alluded to briefly in Ps. 104:14 and 23, but only as a sideline and not as a key point.
- D. This Psalm seems to reflect, to a limited degree, Genesis 1.
1. Day 1, Gen. 1:1, the heavens – Ps. 104:1-4
 2. Days 2-3, Gen. 1:6-9, land – Ps. 104:5-9
 3. Day 3, Gen. 1:10-17, food and water – Ps. 104:13-17
 4. Day 4, Gen. 1:14-19, sun and moon – Ps. 104:19-23
 5. Day 5, Gen. 1:20-23, birds and fish – Ps. 104:24-26
 6. Day 6, Gen. 1:24-26, animals and humans – (see C. above)
 7. Day 6, Gen. 1:29-31, God’s care – Ps. 104:27-30
 8. Day 7, Gen. 2:1-3, the seventh day of rest – Ps. 104:31-34
 9. beyond day 7 (i.e., the Fall of Genesis 3) – Ps. 104:35

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 104:1-4

¹Bless the LORD, O my soul!

O LORD my God, You are very great;

**You are clothed with splendor and majesty,
²Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak,
Stretching out heaven like a *tent* curtain.
³He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters;
He makes the clouds His chariot;
He walks upon the wings of the wind;
⁴He makes the winds His messengers,
Flaming fire His ministers.**

104:1 “Bless the LORD, O my soul” This is the way that both Psalm 103 and 104 begin and end (i.e., *Piel* IMPERATIVES). It is a praise to YHWH from the totality of His highest creation (humans, cf. Gen. 1:26-27).

▣ **“O LORD my God, You are. . .”** Psalm 104:1 has two PERFECTS describing God, followed by seven PARTICIPLES describing His actions.

1. You are very great – BDB 152, KB 178, *Qal* PERFECT, cf Deut. 3:24; 2 Sam. 7:22; 1 Chr. 16:25; Ps. 35:27; 40:16; 48:1; 70:4; 86:10; 96:4; 145:3; Mal.1:5
2. You are clothed – BDB 527, KB 519, *Qal* PERFECT
 - a. splendor (BDB 217, Job 40:10; Ps. 96:6)
 - b. majesty (BDB 214, Ps. 93:1)

Psalm 104 2-4 lists His activities in initial creation of the heavenly realm.

1. He covers Himself with light – BDB 741, KB 813, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Ps. 36:9; Dan. 2:22; 1 Tim. 6:16; James 1:17; 1 John 1:5
2. He stretches out the heaven – BDB 639, KB 692, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Job 9:8; 37:18; Isa. 40:22; 42:5; 45:12; Jer. 10:12; Zech. 12:1
3. he lays the beams of His upper chambers – BDB 900, KB 1138, *Piel* PARTICIPLE
4. He makes the clouds His chariot – BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
5. He walks upon the wings of the wind – BDB 229, KB 246, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, cf. 2 Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10
6. He makes the wind His messenger – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
7. He makes flaming fire His ministers – VERB from #6 assumed
 - a. flaming fire – BDB 529, KB 521, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
 - b. ministers – BDB 1058, KB 1661, *Piel* PARTICIPLE

104:2 “Covering Yourself with light” Because elsewhere in the Psalms the allusion is to Genesis 1, one wants to see this as referring to Gen. 1:3-5, but notice it is God Himself who is being described, not a formless and void earth.

Light is a recurrent biblical theme of truth, healing, revelation, and goodness. God wears it and speaks it into our world!

▣ **“like a *tent* curtain”** This is a common ancient Middle Eastern concept (cf. Isa. 42:5; Job 9:8; Ps. 104:2; Jer. 10:12; 51:15; Zech. 12:1). In the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, heaven is described as a “skin.” In the Rig Veda, heaven is described as “stretched out like a hide.” This is simply a metaphorical way of speaking of the vault of the heaven (i.e., the atmosphere of this planet) above the earth. It is the language of metaphor.

104:3a This speaks of pillars sitting on the bedrock of the earth (cf. Ps. 24:2; 104:5; Job 38:4), upon which the heavens (i.e., atmosphere where moisture is stored) rest (cf. Amos 9:6).

However, this verse could also refer to pillars founded on the waters of the heavens (i.e., atmosphere, cf. Gen 1:7). The imagery is ambiguous, and not to be taken literally. Please read my commentary on Genesis 1-11 online for the genre of Genesis 1-11 at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

At this place in the discussion of YHWH creating His palace/temple above the waters of the atmosphere, I would like to mention a new book by John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, which has been so helpful to me in interpreting Genesis 1. He asserts that Genesis 1 is an ANE account of YHWH building His cosmic temple (cf. Heb. 8:2,5; 9:23-24). I think this text also speaks of that.

The AB suggests a connection with the VERB (BDB 900, KB 1138) and “storehouse” (p. 34), and translates the line as “who stored with water his upper chambers.” Note Job 37:9 as a possible parallel (i.e., “chamber”); also note Job 38:22.

▣ **“He makes the clouds His chariot”** The Septuagint makes this refer to angelic spirits and this is followed by Heb. 1:7, but in context the Hebrew language almost demands that these are simply natural elements that God uses and controls for His own purposes (cf. Isa. 19:1). The word “wind,” in both Hebrew and Greek, can refer to “wind,” “breath,” or “spirit.” See Special Topic: Breath, Wind, Spirit.

Clouds are the traditional means of the transportation of deity (cf. Dan. 7:13; Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Acts 1:9-11; Rev. 1:7). The image calls to remembrance the *Shekinah* cloud of the OT exodus experience (cf. Exod. 13:21,22; 14:19,20,24; 16:10; 19:9,16; 24:15,16,18; 34:5; 40:34-38), which symbolizes God’s presence with His people.

▣ **“He walks upon the wings of the wind”** See note online at Psalm 18:10.

104:4 Physical creation (i.e., wind and fire, cf. Ps. 148:8) is YHWH’s servant (cf. LXX, quoted in Heb. 1:7, personifies the physical aspects into servants). This verse does not, in context, refer to “natural revelation” (cf. Ps. 19:1-6), but YHWH’s intimacy with His physical creation, especially this planet. C. S. Lewis called earth, “the touched planet.”

The UBS *Handbook* (p. 879) has a good pictorial depiction of the ancient Hebrew imagery of the layers of this planet.

1. heaven above (God’s dwelling place)
2. water
3. firmament (hard dome with windows, cf. Ps. 78:23; Mal. 3:10)
4. atmosphere (clouds, birds)
5. pillars that support the heavens (cf. Ps. 104:3)
6. earth (flat)
7. pillars of the earth in the deep (cf. 1 Sam. 2:8; Ps. 75:3)
8. *Sheol* under the earth

See Contextual Insights B. #4.

▣ **“fire”** See Special Topic: Fire

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 104:5-9

- ⁵**He established the earth upon its foundations,
So that it will not totter forever and ever.**
- ⁶**You covered it with the deep as with a garment;
The waters were standing above the mountains.**
- ⁷**At Your rebuke they fled,
At the sound of Your thunder they hurried away.**

⁸The mountains rose; the valleys sank down
 To the place which You established for them.
⁹You set a boundary that they may not pass over,
 So that they will not return to cover the earth.

104:5-9 In Genesis 1 the only thing that God did not speak into existence was “water.” This strophe describes (as does Ps. 104:3) His control of water (cf. Gen. 1:6-8, the waters above; Gen. 1:9-10, the waters below). Job 38:8-11 forms a theological parallel.

104:5 God’s created order is secure (cf. 1 Chr. 16:30; Ps. 24:1-2; 2 Tim. 2:19; Heb. 11:10).

This same imagery is used of the Coming Messiah (i.e., the Cornerstone, cf. 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6-8).

SPECIAL TOPIC: The Cornerstone

▣ **“So that it will not totter forever and ever”** Although Ps. 102:25-26 speaks of the world passing away (cf. Matt. 5:18; 24:35; 2 Pet. 3:10), the earth is also used as a symbol of stability (cf. Ps. 78:69; 93:1; 96:10; Eccl. 1:4). The “heavens and earth” are regularly used as the two permanent witnesses (cf. Deut. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; 32:1).

104:6 This line of poetry asserts that water covered the earth at the beginning of God’s spoken creative activity (cf. Gen. 1:2; Ps. 33:6-7; Pro. 3:19-20; 8:24-25, 27-28). The Genesis summary account describes how God separated things (dark – light; water – land; salt water – fresh water) and how they were designed, in and of themselves, to continue and develop through time.

▣ **“deep”** This term is personified in several ANE creation myths to show the chaos of original creation. However, both in Genesis 1 and Psalm 104:6, God is in control of watery chaos (see Special Topic: waters). It is not a separate, independent entity, but is under the control of God. Although there are some terms in this Psalm which correlate to ancient mythology, the Psalm has removed all of the ancient mythological personalization from these terms (cf. Psalm 74:12-17). See Introduction to Genesis online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

104:7 “At Your rebuke” The NOUN (BDB 172) refers to an oral command or word. This is used in the OT for three events.

1. initial creation – Ps. 18:13, 15; Isa. 50:2 (i.e., Gen. 1:9-10)
2. the dividing of the Red Sea at the exodus – Ps. 78:13; 106:9
3. theophany of judgment (time unspecified) – Ps. 9:5, 11; 9:21; Isa. 17:13

Notice that “thunder” (BDB 947) is parallel (cf. Job 26:14; 37:4-5; Ps. 18:13; 29:3). Thunder is used by John in Revelation to describe the voice of

1. four living creatures, Rev. 6:1
2. a strong angel, Rev. 10:3-4
3. the redeemed, Rev. 14:2
4. great multitude, Rev. 19:6

▣ **“At Your rebuke they fled”** This speaks of the power of God’s spoken word (cf. Genesis 1; Isa. 55:11; Heb. 1:3). It also shows that at His word, not only do things come into existence, but they were formed and shaped by His word after initial creation.

▣ **“At the sound of Your thunder they hurried away”** This seems to remind us of the Exodus experience where God’s voice is described as thunder at the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai (cf. Exod. 19:10-19).

104:8-9 “To the place which You did establish for them” These two verses show that God is in control of His creation. There is a set plan which creation follows. This basic worldview is the background of the western, scientific orientation. There is a natural order which can be discerned because of the creative and preserving hand of God in creation. This is not Theism, which says that God created and then left the world alone. This active, biblical personalism asserts that God is involved moment-by-moment in His creation.

104:9 The Bible has many passages about YHWH controlling and permanently limiting the seas and rivers/lakes (cf. Job 38:8-10; Ps. 74:15; Pro. 8:29; Jer. 5:22). Water, with its destructive power, has been tamed (i.e., Isa. 43:2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 104:10-13

- ¹⁰**He sends forth springs in the valleys;
They flow between the mountains;**
¹¹**They give drink to every beast of the field;
The wild donkeys quench their thirst.**
¹²**Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell;
They lift up *their* voices among the branches.**
¹³**He waters the mountains from His upper chambers;
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works.**

104:10-17 The third day of creation is magnified in this Psalm. It was the creation and watering of vegetation which will prove to be food for both humans and animals (cf. Job 38:39-41). The wild animals will be discussed in Ps. 104:10-13; the domestic animals in Ps. 104:14; and mankind in Ps. 104:14-15.

Notice the recurrent use of PARTICIPLES to show divine activity (cf. Ps. 104:2,3,4,10,13,14).

The abundance of food shows the fulfillment of Lev. 26:1-13; Deut. 28:1-13; Ps. 1:2-3! This is what creation was meant to be and was before the Fall! This is the imagery of Revelation 21-22 (i.e., heaven as a new Eden).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 104:14-17

- ¹⁴**He causes the grass to grow for the cattle,
And vegetation for the labor of man,
So that he may bring forth food from the earth,**
¹⁵**And wine which makes man’s heart glad,
So that he may make *his* face glisten with oil,
And food which sustains man’s heart.**
¹⁶**The trees of the LORD drink their fill,
The cedars of Lebanon which He planted,**
¹⁷**Where the birds build their nests,
*And the stork, whose home is the fir trees.***

104:14 “vegetation for the labor of man” It is interesting to note that mankind was to labor, both before and after the Fall (cf. Gen. 2:15 and 3:17-19).

104:15 “wine which makes man’s heart glad” Wine is seen in a list of the gifts of God. The Bible does not condemn wine but it does condemn the overuse of wine. See Special Topic: Alcohol and Alcohol Abuse.

▣ **“So that he may make *his* face glisten with oil”** The word “glisten” (BDB 843 II) appears only here in the OT. It refers to olive oil, which was used by the ancients as a cosmetic. It was placed on the face and hands in preparation for a festival (cf. Ps. 23:5; 92:10; 141:1; Eccl. 9:8; Luke 7:46).

104:17-18 Although they appear in different stanzas (according to NASB) in the poem, they both seem to describe the types of homes that God has provided for the animals. This Psalm speaks of God’s care and provision for His animal creation.

104:17 “the fir trees” This translation is followed by most English versions. The NEB, REB, and NJB support the emendation (as does the UBS Text Project [“C” rating] for the MT’s “on top of them” [i.e., the highest part of the Cedars of Lebanon])!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 104:18-23

- ¹⁸**The high mountains are for the wild goats;
The cliffs are a refuge for the shephanim.**
- ¹⁹**He made the moon for the seasons;
The sun knows the place of its setting.**
- ²⁰**You appoint darkness and it becomes night,
In which all the beasts of the forest prowl about.**
- ²¹**The young lions roar after their prey
And seek their food from God.**
- ²²**When the sun rises they withdraw
And lie down in their dens.**
- ²³**Man goes forth to his work
And to his labor until evening.**

104:19 “He made the moon for the seasons;

The sun knows the place of its setting” This reflects the fourth day of creation and it shows the significant truth that God is in control of the sun and the moon (cf. Gen. 1:14-19), as well as the light and the darkness (cf. Gen. 1:3-5). This is not like the ANE myths of a conquest or contrast between the forces of light and darkness, but shows that God is in control of all of them. This is a very significant statement in light of the Babylonian astral worship and the horoscope myth of our day (cf. Ps. 19:1-6).

The lights (i.e., sun, moon) are given in Gen. 1:14 to set worship times (i.e., Sabbath, annual feast days, fasts). They are servants of mankind’s worship times. In this context they do not primarily refer to the seasons, unless they are linked to

1. the wet and dry seasons of the ANE (cf. Ps. 104:10-17)
2. the feeding times of different animals (cf. Ps. 104:20-23)

God created and controls light and darkness (cf. Ps. 74:16; Amos 5:8). They are not gods or angels which affect human life! They are aspects of an orderly, regular creation with its cycles of activity and rest.

104:20a This line of poetry has two VERBS which are both JUSSIVES in form (but are not translated as JUSSIVE) as past acts of God at creation (cf. Gen. 1:3-4).

104:21-23 Although it seems somewhat unusual at first, these verses are simply a statement that the animals of the forest use the nighttime to gather their food and mankind and other animals use the daytime to gather their food. There seems to be no more theological implication to this than this simple statement of creation sharing the time available to utilize the productivity of the earth.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 104:24-26

²⁴**O LORD, how many are Your works!**

In wisdom You have made them all;

The earth is full of Your possessions.

²⁵**There is the sea, great and broad,**

In which are swarms without number,

Animals both small and great.

²⁶**There the ships move along,**

And Leviathan, which You have formed to sport in it.

104:24 “In wisdom You have made them all” This may be an allusion to Pro. 8:22-31, where personified “wisdom” is YHWH’s agent in creation (cf. Pro. 3:19).

▣ **“The earth is full of Your possessions”** This refers to the living creatures that have blossomed on the earth, partially water creatures (Ps. 104:25-26).

This term “possessions” (BDB 889) is translated in several ways.

1. NASB, NKJV, TEV, NJB, REB – possession
2. NASB margin, NRSV – creatures
3. JPSOA – creations
4. LXX – acquisitions
5. KJV, Peshitta – riches
6. Knox – Your creative power

The MT has a SINGULAR, but probably it is a collective NOUN.

104:26 “Leviathan, which You have formed to sport in it” God plays with the animals which He created. In Ugaritic literature (i.e., Ras Shamra texts) the high god, *El*, plays with the sea monster, *Loton* (Leviathan in Hebrew). There is an obvious connection between the imagery of the OT and the Ugarit (i.e., Canaanite) mythology. I think OT authors used well known concepts, images, stories of the ANE fertility gods to affirm the uniqueness and majesty of YHWH. See Special Topic: Monotheism.

The term “Leviathan” (BDB 531) refers to an ancient, large sea monster, while the term “Behemoth” (BDB 97, Job 40:15) seems to refer to the ancient, large land monster (cf. Ps. 74:13,14; Job 3:8; 41:1; Isa. 27:1). For a full note on Leviathan see Isa. 27:1 online.

The Jewish Study Bible (p. 1398) mentions that some scholars see the term “Leviathan” in its literal sense of “the escort” – the dolphins or large fish often found near ships.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 104:27-30

²⁷**They all wait for You**

To give them their food in due season.

²⁸You give to them, they gather *it* up;

You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good.

²⁹You hide Your face, they are dismayed;

You take away their spirit, they expire

And return to their dust.

³⁰You send forth Your Spirit, they are created;

And You renew the face of the ground.

104:27-28 “They wait for You” This shows God’s care and providence for all creatures with breath (cf. Gen. 1:29-30; Col. 1:17).

104:29-30 This is simply the fact that the old die (cf. Gen. 3:19; Job 10:9; Ps. 90:3) and young are born to replace them. This is an obvious allusion to mankind being created out of the dust of the earth and God breathing into him the breath of life (cf. Gen. 2:7).

However, it is interesting that a human becomes a *nephesh* (BDB 659) in Gen. 2:7, which means “soul life.” This term *nephesh* is also used to refer to the animals in Genesis (cf. Gen. 1:24; 2:19). See note online at Gen. 35:18.

▣ Notice the double use of “spirit” (i.e., “breath,” BDB 924, see Special Topic: Spirit in the Bible).

1. the human spirit or life force
2. God’s Spirit (or “breath” of Gen. 2:7)

In the OT the “Spirit” is a force from God who accomplishes His purposes (i.e., Gen. 1:2), but in the NT the concept becomes personal (see Special Topic: Personhood of the Spirit).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 104:31-35

³¹Let the glory of the LORD endure forever;

Let the LORD be glad in His works;

³²He looks at the earth, and it trembles;

He touches the mountains, and they smoke.

³³I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;

I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.

³⁴Let my meditation be pleasing to Him;

As for me, I shall be glad in the LORD.

³⁵Let sinners be consumed from the earth

And let the wicked be no more.

Bless the LORD, O my soul.

Praise the LORD!

104:31-32 Several English translations see Ps. 104:31-32 as a separate strophe (i.e., NKJV, TEV, NJB, REB). This is a reference to the seventh day of creation.

There are two grammatical features in these verses.

1. Ps. 104:31 has two JUSSIVES
 - a. let the glory of the LORD endure forever – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE, cf. Ps. 86:12

- b. let the LORD be glad in His work – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Gen. 1:31
2. Ps. 104:32 starts off with “He who. . .” (PARTICIPLE), as was common at the beginning of this Psalm (see note at Ps. 104:1)

104:32 This language is used of a theophany. Exactly how it fits Genesis 1 is uncertain. It usually relates to a time after the Fall when a sinful world is convulsed by the approach of its holy creator God!

104:33-34 Several English translations see Ps. 104:33-35b as a separate strophe (i.e., NKJV, TEV, NJB, REB). This is because

1. Ps. 104:33 has two COHORTATIVES
2. Ps. 104:34-35b has two *Qal* IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense (and an implied third one, Ps. 104:35b)

One will praise God in word, thought, and life or one will be consumed (BDB 1070, KB 1752) and annihilated (lit. “be no more,” cf. Job 24:24; Ps. 37:10). There are eternal consequences to choices made in time!

The ideal creation of abundance and peace has been shattered by human sin and rebellion (i.e., Genesis 3). What God initially created will be restored (compare Genesis 1-2 with Revelation 21-22).

104:35c-d The conclusion of this Psalm matches the double IMPERATIVE of Psalm 103 (two *Piel* IMPERATIVES, “bless”). Here

1. Bless – BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
2. Praise – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 105:45; 106:48

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How are Psalm 103 and 104 related?
2. What is the significance of the term “YHWH,” which is translated “LORD” (all capitals) and *Elohim*, which is translated “God” in English?
3. How does this Psalm reflect Genesis 1?
4. Why is the presence of angels and humanity depreciated in this Psalm and animal life lifted up?
5. Why is God’s control of the moon and stars so significant in this ANE context?
6. How does Ps. 104:33-34 reflect other significant parts of the OT truths about the care of God both in this life and the next life?
7. Explain the modern theological concept of “annihilationism.”

PSALM 105

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD's Wonderful Work in Behalf of Israel <u>No MT Intro</u>	The Eternal Faithfulness of the LORD	The Story of God's Great Deeds on Behalf of His People	God and His People	The Wonderful History of Israel
105:1-7	105:1-6	105:1-6	105:1-6	105:1-3 105:4-5 105:6-7
	105:7-12	105:7-11	105:7-11	
105:8-15				105:8-9 105:10-11 105:12-13
	105:13-15	105:12-15	105:12-15	105:14-15
105:16-24	105:16-22	105:16-22	105:16-22	105:16-17 105:18-19 105:20-21 105:22-23
	105:23-25	105:23-25	105:23-25	105:24-25
105:25-36	105:26-36	105:26-36	105:26-36	105:26-27 105:28-29 105:30-31 105:32-33 105:34-35 105:36-37
105:37-45	105:37-41	105:37-42	105:37-42	105:38-39 105:40-41 105:42-43
	105:42-45	105:43-45	105:43-45b	105:44-45
			105:45c	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Psalm 105 and Psalm 106 form a theological unit.

Just an added thought, modern Bible interpreters really do not know why, how, or when the Psalms were edited and by whom. This is true for all the Hebrew Bible. The process has been lost to us. So, it must be admitted that many presuppositions and speculations drive modern theories of the process of canonization. I surely and completely affirm the inspiration of the Scriptures (see three videos on www.freebiblecommentary.org, first paragraph), but also accept the Jews' understanding of their canon and the early church's decisions on which books to include.

See Special Topic: Inspiration and Special Topic: Bible Interpretation Seminar Textbook, "The Bible, I "Canon," p. 19, online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

- B. Psalm 105 describes God's acts of love and grace in the life of the covenant people.

1. initial call to the Patriarchs, Ps. 105:1-7
2. Patriarchs' journey to Canaan, Ps. 105:8-15
3. Patriarch (Jacob) to Egypt, Ps. 105:16-24
4. Israel from Egypt, Ps. 105:25-36
5. Israel to Canaan, Ps. 105:37-45

- C. Psalm 106 describes the disgrace of Israel's rebellious response.

- D. There are many similarities with this Psalm and 1 Chronicles 16:7-46.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 105:1-7

¹Oh give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name;

Make known His deeds among the peoples.

²Sing to Him, sing praises to Him;

Speak of all His wonders.

³Glory in His holy name;

Let the heart of those who seek the LORD be glad.

⁴Seek the LORD and His strength;

Seek His face continually.

⁵Remember His wonders which He has done,

His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth,

⁶O seed of Abraham, His servant,

O sons of Jacob, His chosen ones!

⁷He is the LORD our God;

His judgments are in all the earth.

105:1-7 This Psalm and this strophe highlight YHWH's special call and relationship with Abraham and his descendants. YHWH acted in powerful, purposeful ways to accomplish His revelation through this one family.

This Psalm uses several terms to describe these acts.

1. His deeds, Ps. 105:1 – BDB 760, cf. 1 Chr. 16:8; Ps. 9:11; 66:5; 77:13; 78:11; 103:7; Isa. 12:4
2. all His wonders, Ps. 105:2 – BDB 810, cf. Exod. 3:20; 34:10; Jos. 3:5; Jdgs. 6:13; 1 Chr. 16:9,24; Job 37:5,14; Ps. 9:1; 26:7; 78:11; 139:14; Jer. 21:2; Micah 7:15, see Special Topic: Wonderful Things
3. his wonders, Ps. 105:5 – BDB 810, see Special Topic at #2
4. His marvels, Ps. 105:5 – BDB 68, cf. Exod. 7:3; 11:9; 1 Chr. 16:12; Job 3:3
5. the judgments, Ps. 105:5 – BDB 1048, see Special Topic: Terms for God's Revelation
6. His judgments, Ps. 105:7 – BDB 1048
7. His wondrous acts, Ps. 105:27 – BDB 68

Different periods of Israel's history demonstrate YHWH's special activities on behalf of Abraham's family. The purpose of these divine acts was to help the nations know YHWH, cf. 1 Kgs. 8:42-43; see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan.

Psalm 105:1-5 has a series of IMPERATIVES imploring the worship of YHWH in the temple.

1. give thanks – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil*, cf. 1 Chr. 16:8,34; Isa. 12:4
2. call upon – BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal*, cf. Ps. 99:6
3. make known – BDB 393, KB 390, *Hiphil*, cf. Ps. 145:12
4. sing – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal*
5. sing praises – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel*, cf. Ps. 66:2; 68:4; 135:3
6. speak/muse – BDB 967, KB 1319, *Qal* cf. Ps. 77:12; 119:27; 145:5; 147:1
7. glory – BDB 237, KB 248, *Hithpael*
8. seek – BDB 205, KB 233, cf. Exod. 33:7; Deut. 4:29; 1 Chr. 16:10; 2 Chr. 11:10-11; Isa. 51:1; Jer. 50:4; Hos. 3:5; 5:6
9. seek – BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel*, cf. 1 Chr. 16:11; 2 Chr. 7:14; Ps. 27:8; Amos 4:5
10. remember – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* cf. 1 Chr. 16:12

105:1 “the LORD” See Special Topic: Names For Deity.

▣ **“call upon His name”** Psalm 105:1-4 describes cultic (religious procedures) worship. The “name” represents the person's character. See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

▣ **“Make known His deeds among the peoples”** It is God’s will that all the earth (cf. Ps. 105:7b) know Him (cf. Ps. 145:12; Isa. 12:4-5, see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan). Israel was a means to this end and the Bible is a record of this revelation.

105:2 “Sing to Him” This (BDB 967, KB 1319) also describes cultic worship. They sang songs about YHWH and His acts of salvation.

▣ **“Speak”** This is literally “meditate” or “muse.” We are to keep God’s character and acts before our minds (cf. Ps. 105:5; Deut. 6:6-9).

105:3 “glory” This VERB means to boast (BDB 237). Israel was to “glory” in the kind of God who called them and was uniquely their God.

▣ **“Let the heart of those who seek the LORD be glad”** The “heart” speaks of the entire person (see Special Topic: Heart). We must respond (the VERB is a *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) to God’s initiative, and the appropriate way is with “joy” (BDB 970).

105:4

NASB, NKJV,

NJB, NRSV “and His strength”

TEV “for help”

LXX, Moffatt “and be strengthened”

JPSOA “His might” (referring to the Ark, cf. Ps. 78:61; 132:8)

Peshitta, REB “be strong”

NAB “rely on”

NET Bible “and the strength he gives”

As is obvious from the variety of translations, the phrase is uncertain. I think, from the context of temple worship (i.e., Ps. 105:1-4), that the JPSOA option is best (i.e., the Ark, cf. Ps. 78:61; 132:8).

▣ **“Seek His face continually”** This is an idiomatic way of calling on faithful followers to keep YHWH and His revelation before their minds (cf. Deut. 6:6-9).

This is similar to Paul’s emphasis of praying without ceasing (cf. Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:16-18).

105:5 “the judgments uttered by His mouth” This reflects the Hebrew concept of the power of the spoken word (cf. Gen. 1:1; Isa. 55:1; John 1:1; and note at Gen. 1:3). For “judgments” see Special Topic: Terms for God’s Revelation.

105:6 This verse reflects God’s choice of Abraham (Ps. 105:6a) and his descendants (105:6b) as His chosen means to redeem all mankind, Gen. 3:15.

Remember, in the OT the term “chosen” (BDB 104; 1 Chr. 16:13) is used for instrumentality (i.e., service), not salvation. God chooses to use nations, people, and historical events for His larger redemptive plan (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan).

105:7 “He is the LORD our God” This phrase may be a reference to the covenant language of Exod. 20:2. It involves the two most common names for Deity, YHWH – LORD and *Elohim* – God. Modern western scholarship has asserted that these represent the name of Deity used by two different human authors of the OT. The Jews assert that they represent the characteristics of the one true God (see Special Topic:

Monotheism). *Elohim* is Deity's title as creator, provider, and sustainer of all life, while YHWH is Deity's covenant title as savior and redeemer. See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

▣ **“His judgments are in all the earth”** This refers to God's universal focus, which is so dominant in this section of the Psalms (i.e., Psalm 96, see notes there).

The term “earth” can be translated “land.” See Special Topic: Land, Country Earth.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 105:8-15

⁸**He has remembered His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded to a thousand generations,**
⁹***The covenant which He made with Abraham,
And His oath to Isaac.***
¹⁰**Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
To Israel as an everlasting covenant,**
¹¹**Saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan
As the portion of your inheritance,”**
¹²**When they were only a few men in number,
Very few, and strangers in it.**
¹³**And they wandered about from nation to nation,
From *one* kingdom to another people.**
¹⁴**He permitted no man to oppress them,
And He reproved kings for their sakes:**
¹⁵**“Do not touch My anointed ones,
And do My prophets no harm.”**

105:8-15 This strophe alludes to YHWH's call to Abraham to leave Ur and follow Him to a new land of promise (i.e., Genesis 12-18). This same promise was reaffirmed to Jacob/Israel (cf. Gen. 28:13-15).

YHWH protected and provided for the descendants of Abraham as they sojourned in Canaan (i.e., Gen. 12:7; 20:1-7; 35:5).

105:8 “He has remembered His covenant forever” Almost all of God's promises are conditioned on human response. Therefore, “forever” must be interpreted in the context of conditional/unconditional covenant (see Special Topic: Forever (*'olam*)).

The focus of the biblical revelation is that God is faithful even when mankind is not (compare Psalm 105 with Psalm 106). Fallen mankind's hope is not in his ability to perform, although there is a required continuing repentant faith response necessary. It is the unchanging character of God that provides hope and assurance (cf. Mal. 1:6).

For “covenant” see Special Topic: Covenant.

▣ **“to a thousand generations”** This is an idiom for God's faithfulness. It is parallel to “forever” in Ps. 105:8a. It is used as a contrast between God's love and justice in Deut. 5:9 and 7:9.

“Thousand” is a symbolic number used in several senses. See Special Topic: Thousand (*eleph*) and Special Topic: Symbolic Numbers in Scripture.

105:9-10 YHWH repeated His initial promise about the land to Abram to the other Patriarchs.

1. Abraham – Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18
2. Isaac – Gen. 26:3-4
3. Jacob/Israel – Gen. 28:13

105:11 This is an allusion to Gen. 12:1; 13:15; and 15:18.

▣ **“As the portion of your inheritance”** See full note online at Ps. 78:55.

105:12 The family of Abraham started out very small (cf. Gen. 34:30; 46:26-27; Deut. 7:7; 1 Chr. 16:19) but grew to be as numerous as the stars of heaven, the sand on the sea shore.

105:15 “My anointed ones. . . My prophets” These are in a parallel relationship and, therefore, refer to the Patriarchs (cf. Gen. 20:7).

This term “anointed ones” (BDB 603) is the root meaning of Messiah (see Special Topic: Messiah). It refers to the Patriarchs or the community that God has chosen and equipped to perform His will.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 105:16-24

- ¹⁶**And He called for a famine upon the land;
He broke the whole staff of bread.**
- ¹⁷**He sent a man before them,
Joseph, *who* was sold as a slave.**
- ¹⁸**They afflicted his feet with fetters,
He himself was laid in irons;**
- ¹⁹**Until the time that his word came to pass,
The word of the LORD tested him.**
- ²⁰**The king sent and released him,
The ruler of peoples, and set him free.**
- ²¹**He made him lord of his house
And ruler over all his possessions,**
- ²²**To imprison his princes at will,
That he might teach his elders wisdom.**
- ²³**Israel also came into Egypt;
Thus Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.**
- ²⁴**And He caused His people to be very fruitful,
And made them stronger than their adversaries.**

105:16-24 This strophe deals with YHWH leading His covenant people from Canaan to Egypt. This was God’s plan.

1. to raise up Joseph as a leader in preparation, Ps. 105:17
2. to force the move by way of a famine, Ps. 105:16
3. to cause later friction between the Egyptians and Israelites so as to demonstrate His power over the Egyptian gods and reveal Himself to the Egyptians and the surrounding nations of the ANE, Ps. 105:25

The “few in number” of Ps. 105:12 is contrasted with Ps. 105:24.

105:16 “He called. . .He broke” God uses calamity for His purposes, Isa. 45:7. This seems contradictory to Ps. 105:14-15, but God uses both positive and negative events. This is obvious in His covenant relationship with Israel (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-29; Psalm 1). See full note at Isa. 45:7 online.

▣ **“staff and bread”** This idiom is used several times in the OT (cf. Lev. 26:26; Ezek. 4:16; 5:16; 14:13). God controls rain and food. He wants to bless but sin and rebellion cause the necessities of life to be withheld (i.e., Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30). In Psalm 105 the famine was to accomplish a divine plan (i.e., Joseph to a place of leadership in Egypt and Israel to take up residence there).

The term “staff” (BDB 641) could refer to

1. stalk of grain
2. wooden rod on which the food was carried
3. wooden rod to suspend the food so that animals could not eat it
4. symbolic way of referring to the absolute necessity of bread for life in the ANE

105:17 “He sent a man before them” This refers to Joseph as being God’s means of saving and sustaining the chosen family of Jacob (cf. Genesis 37; 39-46). Joseph’s own sense of YHWH’s actions is expressed in Gen. 45:4-8; 50:20. The eyes of faith see history clearly!

105:18 “He himself was laid in irons” This reflects the painful experience of Joseph being sold by his own brothers, though he recognized God’s hand (cf. Genesis 37; 45:4-8).

The MT is literally “iron came (into his) soul.”

The VERB “came” (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* PERFECT) is a common VERB, with several connotations.

The word “soul” is *nephesh* (BDB 659), which also has a wide semantic field, but usually denotes air-breathing life on this planet (i.e., human and animal).

Most modern English translations assume that the consonants for *nephesh*, in this context, reflect an Akkadian root for “throat” or “neck” (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB, JPSOA, REB). Iron was a way of referring to imprisonment (cf. Ps. 107:10).

However, the LXX translated the phrase as “his soul passed through iron.” Joseph’s life experiences of rejection by his brothers and the cruel treatment in the Egyptian prison were painful and lasting scars. But they also produced a strong, faithful follower (cf. Heb. 5:8).

105:19 “the LORD tested him” God tests all His children (cf. Adam and Eve, Genesis 3; Abraham, Gen. 22:1; Jesus, Matt. 4:11). The test is meant to strengthen, not destroy. See Special Topic: God Tests His People.

105:20 “the king” There is much scholarly disagreement about the dates related to Israel’s sojourn in Egypt and the date of the Exodus. Modern scholars are not sure of

1. the date of the Exodus
2. the number of Israelites involved in the Exodus
3. the Pharaoh of the Exodus
4. the route of the Exodus

See Special Topic: The Exodus (uncertainties).

105:22 Psalm 105:20-22 relates to Pharaoh. He allowed Joseph to have authority over his own princes and elders.

The term “imprison” is literally “to bind” (BDB 63, KB 75, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). It is the legal terminology related to “binding and loosing” (cf. UBS Text Project, p. 380).

In context this word, which usually denotes “the binding of a prisoner,” is what the powerful imagery of Ps. 105:18 describes, but it does not use the word. However, there is an obvious play on – the Egyptians binding Joseph, now he binds them!

104:24 This reflects the blessing of numerous children seen in Exod. 1:7,9.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 105:25-36

- ²⁵**He turned their heart to hate His people,**
To deal craftily with His servants.
- ²⁶**He sent Moses His servant,**
And Aaron, whom He had chosen.
- ²⁷**They performed His wondrous acts among them,**
And miracles in the land of Ham.
- ²⁸**He sent darkness and made *it* dark;**
And they did not rebel against His words.
- ²⁹**He turned their waters into blood**
And caused their fish to die.
- ³⁰**Their land swarmed with frogs**
Even in the chambers of their kings.
- ³¹**He spoke, and there came a swarm of flies**
And gnats in all their territory.
- ³²**He gave them hail for rain,**
And flaming fire in their land.
- ³³**He struck down their vines also and their fig trees,**
And shattered the trees of their territory.
- ³⁴**He spoke, and locusts came,**
And young locusts, even without number,
- ³⁵**And ate up all vegetation in their land,**
And ate up the fruit of their ground.
- ³⁶**He also struck down all the firstborn in their land,**
The first fruits of all their vigor.

105:25-36 As Ps. 105:8-15 reflects the Patriarchal period and Ps. 105:16-24 reflects the Joseph experience, Ps. 105:25-36 reflects the Exodus.

105:25 “He turned their heart to hate His people” As God hardened Pharaoh’s heart toward Moses’ requests, He hardened the people of Egypt toward the Jews. Following I have included my unpublished notes on Exod. 4:21.

Exod. 4:21 “but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go” God informs Moses that though in the presence of great light, the Hebrews will believe, but Pharaoh will not be convinced. This passage, and ones similar to it, have caused tremendous problems to western theologians. We must allow this to speak in its original context and not bring to this passage questions that it was never intended to ask or to explicate. In the ANE, and particularly in Israel,

God was the source of all things (cf. Job 2:10; Eccl. 3:28 Isa. 45:7; 54:16; Lam. 3:37; Ezek. 14:9; Amos 3:6b). Therefore, the Jews saw no problem in God hardening Pharaoh's heart or in Pharaoh hardening his own heart. It is only in light of further NT revelation about mankind's need to respond to God that the problem of God's sovereignty and mankind's free will becomes a mysterious paradox for the church. It is best to affirm both truths than it is to magnify one over the other. The best place in the Bible to ascertain the relationship between these two is Romans 9 on the sovereignty of God and Romans 10 on the free will of mankind. In Exodus Pharaoh is described as being hardened in three ways.

1. God hardened his heart, Exod. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8 (cf. Rom. 9:34)
2. Pharaoh hardened his own heart, Exod. 8:15,32; 9:34
3. his heart was hardened but with no mention of the source, Exod. 7:13,14,22; 8:19; 9:7,35

It is also interesting to note that three different VERBS are used to describe this hardening.

1. "to be strong" in the sense of callous, Exod. 4:21; 7:13,22; 8:19; 9:12,35; 10:20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8
2. "to be heavy" and, therefore, lack of responsiveness, Exod. 7:14; 8:15,32; 9:7,34; 10:1
3. "to be hard," Exod. 7:3

However, all of these seem to be used in a synonymous relationship. The Bible emphatically teaches that each of us is personally responsible for our actions, including Pharaoh and Judas Iscariot.

105:26 The account of YHWH calling Moses and sending him back to Egypt is recorded in Exodus 3-4. The need for Aaron is explained in Exod. 4:10-17.

1. Exod. 4:10, Moses' excuse
2. Exod. 4:11-12, YHWH's answer
3. Exod. 4:13, Moses' continuing refusal
4. Exod. 4:14-16, YHWH's answer to send Aaron to speak for him

105:27 "the land of Ham" The Hebrews recognized that the Egyptians were ancient brothers. Ham is also mentioned in Ps. 78:51; 106:22. This speaks of the unity of mankind. See full notes at Genesis 10.

105:28-36 This describes the plagues (cf. Exodus 7-11). However, this is only a partial list. It starts with the 9th, then the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 3rd, 7th, 8th, and 10th.

105:28 "And they did not rebel against His words" The LXX and Peshitta leave out the negative. This is followed by NRSV and REB. However, the MT has the negative and the UBS Text Project gives its inclusion a "B" rating (some doubt). The interpretive issue is, who is "they."

1. MT – Moses and Aaron
2. LXX – the Egyptians, especially Pharaoh

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 105:37-45

- ³⁷Then He brought them out with silver and gold,
And among His tribes there was not one who stumbled.
- ³⁸Egypt was glad when they departed,
For the dread of them had fallen upon them.
- ³⁹He spread a cloud for a covering,
And fire to illumine by night.

⁴⁰They asked, and He brought quail,
 And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.
⁴¹He opened the rock and water flowed out;
 It ran in the dry places *like* a river.
⁴²For He remembered His holy word
 With Abraham His servant;
⁴³And He brought forth His people with joy,
 His chosen ones with a joyful shout.
⁴⁴He gave them also the lands of the nations,
 That they might take possession of *the fruit of the peoples' labor*,
⁴⁵So that they might keep His statutes
 And observe His laws,
 Praise the LORD!

105:37-43 These verses reflect the wilderness wandering period (cf. Numbers 13-36).

105:37 “with silver and gold” The Egyptians gave the Israelites much gold and silver (cf. Exod. 3:21-22; 11:2; 12:35-36). It was a way of illustrating the humiliating defeat by YHWH (cf. Ps. 105:38).

▣ **“among His tribes”** This phrase may be related to “by their hosts” (BDB 838), which is found in Exod. 6:26; 12:51; and Josephus, *Antiq.* 14.6. It means that as the Israelites left Egypt on their Exodus, they camped by tribal groupings.

▣ **“there was not one who stumbled”** This shows God’s special miraculous care for the old, sick, and young (cf. Deut. 8:4).

105:39 “. . .cloud. . .” This was called the “*Shekinah* Cloud of Glory” by the rabbis (cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19,24; 33:9-10; Ps. 78:14; 99:7). It accomplished several things for the Israelites.

1. symbol of YHWH’s personal presence (*shekinah* means “to dwell with”)
2. it separated Israel from Pharaoh’s elite troops (cf. Exod. 14:19-20)
3. it led Israel (cf. Exod. 13:21-22; Num. 9:17-23)
4. it covered them and protected them from the heat (cf. Ps. 105:39)
5. it lit up the camp by night, even allowed Israel to travel at night (cf. Exod. 13:21; Neh. 9:12,19)
6. it caused the nations to fear Israel (cf. Exod. 23:27; Deut. 2:25; 11:25; Jos. 2:9)
7. it finally disappeared when Israel crossed the Jordan (cf. Exod. 16:35; Jos. 5:12), but reappeared at the dedication of Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 8).

105:40 “They asked” The MT has “he asked.” The UBS Text Project (p. 381) gives this a “C” rating (considerable doubt). The question is who the PRONOUN refers to.

1. the people as a whole
2. one among them acting as a spokesperson
3. YHWH Himself

▣ **“quail”** God provided quail meat twice (cf. Exod. 16:13-14 and Num. 11:31) as a sign of His love and promise of provisions and care.

▣ **“bread of heaven”** This was another name for manna (cf. Exodus 16).

In Deut. 8:3, the people called it “manna” (BDB 577 I, [Exod. 16:31] from the question of Exod. 16:4, “What is it?” Moses called it “bread from heaven,” Exod. 16:4). It was God’s special provision of food during the wilderness wandering period. It is described in Exod. 16:4, 14-15; 31; Num. 11:7-8, but its exact substance is unknown to us (BDB says it was known to Bedouins in the Sinai and that it was strictly a juice from a certain twig, but this does not fit the biblical description). God provided what they needed for each day, not for a long period of time, so the people would learn to trust Him for their daily needs. He does this for new covenant believers also (cf. Matt. 6:11).

105:41 “He opened the rock” This divine provision of water was repeated several times (cf. Exod. 17:1-6; Num. 20:11; Deut. 8:15; Ps. 78:20; 114:8). It becomes a Messianic symbol in 1 Cor. 10:4.

105:42 “He remembered His holy word” This refers to God’s initial covenant with Abraham (cf. Ps. 105:5-6; Genesis 12-15, especially Gen. 15:16).

105:44-45 These verses reflect the Conquest of Canaan under Joshua.

105:45 “keep His statutes,

And obey His laws” Obedience to the revealed word of God is crucial. Obedience reveals the heart. The covenant has two aspects.

1. the sovereignty and faithfulness of YHWH (cf. Deut. 4:39)
2. the faith and obedience of His people (cf. Deut. 4:40; Ps. 25:10; 103:18)
3. YHWH is faithful (cf. Deut. 7:9), so His followers must be also!

▣ **“Praise the LORD”** This is literally “praise *Yah*” (BDB 237 II, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERATIVE with *Yah*, BDB 219). In English it is transliterated “hallelujah.” This phrase is a common refrain in the last section of the Psalter (i.e., Ps. 104:35; 105:45; 106:1,48; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1,9; 116:19; 117:2; 135:1,21; 146:1,10; 147:1; 148:1,14; 149:1,9; 150:1,6). How appropriate!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does the Bible encourage us to participate in public, corporate worship?
2. What are the implications of monotheism?
3. Does God send famine? (Ps. 105:16)
4. Why are God’s acts of love and deliverance on behalf of Israel so significant?
5. Are God’s covenants conditional or unconditional?
6. Why is the Psalm called “salvation history”?

PSALM 106

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Israel's Rebelliousness and the LORD's Deliverance	Joy in Forgiveness of Israel's Sins	The Story of God's Great Deeds, with Confession of Sin and Prayer for Help	The LORD's Goodness to His People	National Confession of Guilt
<u>No MT Intro</u>				
106:1-3	106:1a 106:1b-3	106:1-3	106:1-3	106:1-2 106:3-4b
106:4-5	106:4-5	106:4-5	106:4-5	106:4c-5
106:6-12	106:6-7 106:8-12	106:6-12	106:6-12	106:6-7b 106:7c-8 106:9-10 106:11-12
106:13-15	106:13-15	106:13-15	106:13-15	106:13-14 106:15-16
106:16-18	106:16-18	106:16-18	106:16-18	106:17-18
106:19-27	106:19-23 106:24-27	106:19-23 106:24-27	106:19-23 106:24-27	106:19-20 106:21-22 106:23 106:24-25 106:26-27
106:28-31	106:28-31	106:28-31	106:28-31	106:28-29 106:30-31
106:32-33	106:32-33	106:32-33	106:32-33	106:32-33
106:34-39	106:34-39	106:34-39	106:34-39	106:34-35 106:36-37 106:38 106:39-40
106:40-43	106:40-43	106:40-43	106:40-46	106:41-42 106:43-44
106:44-46	106:44-46	106:44-46		106:45-46

106:47-48	106:47	106:47	106:47	106:47
	106:48a-c	106:48	106:48a-c	106:48
	106:48d		106:48d	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. If Psalm 105 is a history of YHWH's salvation/deliverance of Abraham and his descendants; then Psalm 106 is a history of their continuous rebellion. YHWH is faithful; His people are faithless!
- B. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Judges are the focus of the vast majority of the historical allusions. Here is a list of them.

1. Ps. 106:7 – Exod. 14:11-12 2. Ps. 106:9 – Exod. 14:21 3. Ps. 106:10 – Exod. 14:30 4. Ps. 106:11 – Exod. 14:28; 15:5 5. Ps. 106:12 – Exod. 14:31 6. Ps. 106:13 – Exod. 15:24; 16:2; 17:2 7. Ps. 106:14 – Exod. 17:2; Num. 11:4 8. Ps. 106:15 – Num. 11:31 9. Ps. 106:16 – Num. 16:3 10. Ps. 106:17 – Num. 16:32 11. Ps. 106:18 – Num. 16:35 12. Ps. 106:19 – Exod. 32:4; Deut. 9:8 13. Ps. 106:23 – Exod. 32:10,11-14; Deut. 9:14,25-29 14. Ps. 106:24 – Num. 14:31; Deut. 1:32; 9:23 15. Ps. 106:25 – Num. 14:2; Deut. 1:27 16. Ps. 106:26 – Num. 14:28-35 17. Ps. 106:27 – Deut. 4:27 18. Ps. 106:28 – Num. 25:2,3; Deut. 4:3	19. Ps. 106:29 – Num. 25:4 20. Ps. 106:30 – Num. 25:7,8 21. Ps. 106:31 – Num. 25:11-13 22. Ps. 106:32 – Num. 20:2-13 23. Ps. 106:33 – Num. 20:3,10 24. Ps. 106:34 – Jdgs. 1:21,27-36; Deut. 7:2,16 25. Ps. 106:35 – Jdgs. 3:5,6 26. Ps. 106:36 – Jdgs. 2:12 27. Ps. 106:37 – Deut. 12:31; 32:17 28. Ps. 106:38 – Num. 35:33; Deut. 18:10 29. Ps. 106:39 – Lev. 17:7; 18:24; Num. 15:39; Jdgs. 2:17 30. Ps. 106:40 – Lev. 26:30; Deut. 32:19; Jdgs. 2:14 31. Ps. 106:41 – Jdgs. 2:14 32. Ps. 106:42 – Jdgs. 4:3; 10:12 33. Ps. 106:43 – Jdgs. 2:16-18; 6:6 34. Ps. 106:44 – Jdgs. 3:9; 6:7; 10:10 35. Ps. 106:45 – Lev. 26:42; Jdgs. 2:18 36. Ps. 106:46 – 2 Chr. 30:9; Ezra 9:9; Neh. 1:11
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- C. As is often true in the Psalter, the fluctuation between SINGULAR and PLURAL may be connected to an editor converting an individual psalm into a corporate/liturgical psalm.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 106:1-3

¹Praise the LORD!

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;

For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

²Who can speak of the mighty deeds of the LORD,

Or can show forth all His praise?

³How blessed are those who keep justice,

Who practice righteousness at all times!

106:1-3 This first strophe has two themes.

1. description of YHWH
 - a. He is good (BDB 373 II, cf. 2 Chr. 5:13; 7:3; Ps. 25:8; 86:5; 100:5; 107:1; 118:1,29; 145:9)
 - b. His lovingkindness (see Special Topic: Lovingkindness [*hesed*]) and Special Topic: Forever [*‘olam*])
2. description of His true followers
 - a. they speak of His mighty deeds
 - b. they praise Him
 - c. they keep justice (see Special Topic: Judge, Justice, and Judgment)
 - d. they (see LXX, Peshitta, Vulgate, MT, “he”) practice righteousness (see Special Topic: Righteousness)

This description is crucial because what follows is repeated historical allusion to Israel’s faithlessness.

106:1 The Psalm begins and ends with commands to praise.

1. praise – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, Ps. 106:1, cf. 107:1; 118:1,29; 136:1
2. give thanks (lit. praise) – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, Ps. 106:1, cf. 1 Chr. 16:41
3. praise – same as #1, Ps. 106:48

Faithful followers praise Him by how they speak of Him and how they live like Him! Blessed is the person who obeys the Lord (cf. Psalm 1).

106:2 “mighty deeds” This refers to YHWH’s acts of deliverance and provision. This theme is continued from Psalm 105 (see full note on the seven occurrences in Psalm 105 at 105:1-7 notes).

1. mighty deeds, Ps. 106:2 – BDB 150, cf. Deut. 3:24; Ps. 20:6; 71:16; 145:4,12; 150:2; Isa. 63:15
2. wonders, Ps. 106:7 – BDB 810 (see note at Ps. 105:1-7)
3. works, Ps. 106:13 – BDB 795, cf. Jos. 24:31; Ps. 33:4; 93:5
4. great things, Ps. 106:21 – BDB 152, i.e., esp. in Egypt, cf. Deut. 10:21; here; but also of YHWH’s other acts in Job 5:9; 9:10; 37:5; Ps. 71:19; 126:2
5. wonders, Ps. 106:22 – same as #2
6. wonders (lit. “terrible things”), Ps. 106:22 – BDB 431, KB 432, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Deut. 10:21; 2 Sam. 7:23; 1 Chr. 17:21; Ps. 66:3; 145:6; Isa. 64:3

106:3 “at all times” This is a crucial aspect to discipleship. Godly living is a full-time task! Now, remember this is an OT setting. It reflects “the two ways” of Deut. 30:15,19; Psalm 1. The quote at Gal. 3:10-12 illustrates the performance-based OT covenant. Even though NT believers are not under the OT (cf. Acts 15), once we know God in Christ, we live for Him “at all times.” We do this, not to be accepted

but because we are/have been accepted! The goal of biblical faith is not heaven someday, but Christlikeness every day (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 4:13; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3,7; 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:15)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 106:4-5

**⁴Remember me, O LORD, in *Your* favor toward *Your* people;
Visit me with *Your* salvation,
⁵That I may see the prosperity of *Your* chosen ones,
That I may rejoice in the gladness of *Your* nation,
That I may glory with *Your* inheritance.**

106:4-5 This strophe begins with two IMPERATIVES used as a prayer.

1. remember me – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. visit me (lit. “help”) – BDB 823, KB 955, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

The LXX, Peshitta, and Vulgate have “us” instead of “me.”

These verses seem to reflect a person in exile (cf. Ps. 106:47, i.e., because of all the sins of His covenant people, 106:6), who is praying to live long enough to experience YHWH’s restoration of His people. He mentions several phrases that point toward YHWH’s merciful covenant (i.e., remember).

1. Your favor – Ps. 106:4
2. Your chosen ones – Ps. 106:5
3. Your nation – Ps. 106:5
4. Your inheritance – Ps. 106:5

106:5 Notice the three INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS.

1. that I may see – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal*
2. that I may rejoice – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal*
3. that I may glory – BDB 237, KB 248, *Hithpael*

Notice that all three have a corporate focus.

1. Your chosen ones
2. Your nation
3. Your inheritance

Be careful of an exclusive, individualistic emphasis related to salvation. We are saved to serve the family of God/the body of Christ. Too much focus on the individual opens the spiritual door to the sins of Eden (Genesis 3).

▣ **“Your nation”** The Hebrew word translated “nation” (BDB 156) is usually a negative term referring to Gentiles (i.e., Ps. 2:1,8; 9:5,15,17,19,20) but it can be used of Israel, as here (cf. Gen. 12:2; Deut. 4:6-8; Ps. 33:12; Isa. 26:2; Jer. 31:36).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 106:6-12

**⁶We have sinned like our fathers,
We have committed iniquity, we have behaved wickedly.
⁷Our fathers in Egypt did not understand *Your* wonders;
They did not remember *Your* abundant kindnesses,
But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea.**

⁸Nevertheless He saved them for the sake of His name,
That He might make His power known.
⁹Thus He rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up,
And He led them through the deeps, as through the wilderness.
¹⁰So He saved them from the hand of the one who hated *them*,
And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
¹¹The waters covered their adversaries;
Not one of them was left.
¹²Then they believed His words;
They sang His praise.

106:6-12 This strophe focuses on the Exodus.

1. the current people of God (Ps. 106:6)
 - a. they sinned like their fathers (PERFECT)
 - b. they committed iniquity (PERFECT)
 - c. they behaved wickedly (PERFECT)
2. our fathers (Ps. 106:7, cf. Lev. 26:40; Neh. 9:32-34; Jer. 3:25; Dan. 9:8,16)
 - a. did not understand Your wonders
 - b. did not remember Your abundant kindnesses (cf. Jdgs. 8:34; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 78:42)
 - c. rebelled by the sea
3. never-the-less YHWH still acted (Ps. 106:8-11) on their behalf
 - a. He saved them
 - b. He made His power known (i.e., revealed His character in His acts, cf. Ps. 98:2; 103:7)
 - c. He rebuked the Red Sea (for this unusual VERB see Ps. 104:7)
 - d. He led them through
 - e. He saved them
 - f. He redeemed them
4. after all of YHWH's acts they did believe (cf. Exod. 14:31; see Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT) and praised Him (Ps. 106:12)

Some scholars see this verse as denoting a national confession of sin during a feast day at the temple. The plea for forgiveness is in Ps. 106:47 and the confidence in YHWH's grace is in Ps. 106:48.

106:7 “at the sea” There seems to be a repetition in the MT. Many modern translations (NRSV, NJB, NAB) take the consonants from “at the sea” and combine them into a name for YHWH (cf. Ps. 78:17,56; Dan. 7:18,22,25) to get one title for God.

1. Most High – NRSV, NJB, NAB
2. Almighty – TEV

▣ **“the red sea”** See Special Topic: Red Sea

106:8 This verse focuses on the larger redemptive purpose of YHWH in the Exodus (see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan). He wanted the nations

1. to fear Israel
2. to know Him

The problem is that Israel never fully kept the covenant (cf. Ps. 106:6-7). The nations received a distorted revelation (cf. Ezek. 36:22-23), so YHWH needed to develop a new way (i.e., a new covenant, cf. Jer. 31:32-34) to reach them. He revealed Himself (cf. Ezek. 36:23-32).

106:10 “redeemed” See Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 106:13-15

- ¹³**They quickly forgot His works;
They did not wait for His counsel,
¹⁴But craved intensely in the wilderness,
And tempted God in the desert.
¹⁵So He gave them their request,
But sent a wasting disease among them.**

106:13-15 This strophe is theologically tied to the previous one (Ps. 106:6-12). Israel’s repentance, confession, and belief did not last.

The structural features of Ps. 106:6-12 are repeated.

1. their acts, Ps. 106:13-14
 - a. they quickly forgot (often a warning, cf. Deut. 4:9; 6:12; 8:14; Ps. 103:2) His word (cf. Ps. 106:24)
 - b. they did not wait for His counsel
 - c. they craved intensely (Num. 11:4)
2. YHWH’s response
 - a. He gave them their evil desires (i.e., food, cf. Num. 11:4-6,31; Ps. 78:29-31; also note Rom. 1:24,26,28)
 - b. He sent a wasting disease (cf. Num. 11:33; see a good brief discussion in Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, p. 136)

106:14 “And tempted God in the desert” This VERB (BDB 650, KB 702, *Piel* IMPERFECT with *waw*) is used to describe Israel’s unbelief during the exodus and wandering period (i.e., in the desert). This unbelief is expressed by their attacks on YHWH’s leadership team (i.e., Moses and Aaron, cf. Exod. 5:21; 14:11; 15:24; 16:2; 17:2,3; 32:1; Num. 11:1,4; 14:1,2; 21:5; Ps. 106:16). This very VERB is used in Exod. 17:2,7; Num. 14:22; Deut. 6:16; 33:8; Ps. 78:18,41,56; 95:9.

It is interesting to note that several times this VERB is used of God testing His people (cf. Gen. 22:1; Exod. 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2,16; 13:3; Jdgs. 2:22; 3:1,4; see Special Topic: God Tests His People).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 106:16-18

- ¹⁶**When they became envious of Moses in the camp,
And of Aaron, the holy one of the LORD,
¹⁷The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
And engulfed the company of Abiram.
¹⁸And a fire blazed up in their company;
The flame consumed the wicked.**

106:16-18 This strophe reflects Numbers 16, the wilderness wandering period.

106:16 “the holy one of the LORD” This refers to Aaron as the High Priest. There was a controversy in Numbers 16 over who was the true leader of Israel (cf. Num. 16:1-7). Aaron’s special holiness connected to being the High Priest is seen in his clothing as described in Exodus 28, especially verse 36.

106:18 “fire” There are several places in Numbers where fire is used for judgment.

1. Nadab and Abihu – killed by fire for offering “strange fire,” Num. 3:4; 26:61
2. YHWH’s fire on the complaining Israelites – Num. 11:1-3
3. Korah’s rebellion – Num. 16:35; 26:10

In Exod. 24:17 and Deut. 4:24, the glory of the Lord is described as a devouring fire (see Special Topic: Fire). This denotes the *Shekinah* cloud of glory that led and protected the Israelites.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 106:19-27

¹⁹**They made a calf in Horeb
And worshiped a molten image.**
²⁰**Thus they exchanged their glory
For the image of an ox that eats grass.**
²¹**They forgot God their Savior,
Who had done great things in Egypt,**
²²**Wonders in the land of Ham
And awesome things by the Red Sea.**
²³**Therefore He said that He would destroy them,
Had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before Him,
To turn away His wrath from destroying *them*.**
²⁴**Then they despised the pleasant land;
They did not believe in His word,**
²⁵**But grumbled in their tents;
They did not listen to the voice of the LORD.**
²⁶**Therefore He swore to them
That He would cast them down in the wilderness,**
²⁷**And that He would cast their seed among the nations
And scatter them in the lands.**

106:19-27 This strophe reflects Exodus 32 and Numbers 14.

106:19 “made a calf” The calf was intended to be a physical representation of YHWH (cf. Exod. 32:8; note the two golden calves of Jeroboam I at Dan and Bethel). It was made from some of the gold given to the Israelites by the Egyptians. But, it also reminded the Israelites of an Egyptian fertility god (cf. Exod. 32:6,19).

The calf was also used as a symbol in Canaanite fertility worship for *El* and *Ba’al* (i.e., Ras Shamra texts).

▣ **“Horeb”** This Hebrew root (BDB 352, KB 349) means “waste” or “desert.” It is the term used most often in Deuteronomy for “the mountain where YHWH met Israel.” In Exodus and Numbers it is called “Sinai” (BDB 696), which is a non-Hebrew word. It may be related to the “Wilderness of Sin” (BDB 95, cf. Exod. 16:1; 17:1; Num. 23:11,12). The term is often associated with a small desert bush.

SPECIAL TOPIC: The Location of Mt. Sinai

106:20 What a shocking verse! God's own people turned from the one true God to an idol (cf. Jer. 2:11-13; as do all humans, Rom. 1:21-23)!

106:22 “in the land of Ham” Ham (BDB 325 I) is one of the sons of Noah. He was the father of several nations (Genesis 10).

1. Egypt (Mizraim), cf. Ps. 78:51; 105:23,27
2. Canaan

106:23 YHWH expressed to Moses that He was going to destroy them and start over with him, as He had done with Abraham (cf. Exod. 32:10).

Moses interceded with YHWH on Israel's behalf (cf. Exod. 32:11-13). I think this was a test for the strengthening of Moses. YHWH changed His mind (cf. Exod. 32:14) and responded to Moses' prayer. See Special Topic: Intercessory Prayer.

106:24 Several times Israel refused to believe YHWH about His giving them the land of Canaan (cf. Num. 14:1-3,31; 20:3-4; Deut. 9:23; Ezek. 20:5-8).

▣ **“He swore to them”** The VERB (BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT with *waw*) literally means “to lift up” (i.e., the hand in a gesture to swear an oath), YHWH's promise in Gen. 15:18. This is alluded to in Exod. 6:8; Num. 14:30; Neh. 9:15.

106:27 The two VERBS refer to exile.

1. cast (lit. “cause to fall”) – BDB 656, KB 709, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. Ps. 106:26b
2. scatter – BDB 279, KB 280, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

This was an early warning against covenant disobedience, cf. Lev. 26:33; Deut. 4:27; 28:64; 29:28; Ps. 44:11; Ezek. 20:23. As YHWH drove out the Canaanite tribes because of their sins (cf. Gen. 15:12-21), now in impartial judgment, He does the same to Israel! Sin has consequences!

One more thought about exile. As painful and shameful as it was, it facilitated YHWH's spreading the message about Himself. The problem was that Israel continued to give the wrong message (cf. Ezek. 36:22-23).

The “new covenant” of Jer. 31:31-34 will focus on YHWH revealing Himself by His gracious acts to rebellious Israel (cf. Ezek. 36:24-38).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 106:28-31

- ²⁸**They joined themselves also to Baal-peor,
And ate sacrifices offered to the dead.**
- ²⁹**Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds,
And the plague broke out among them.**
- ³⁰**Then Phinehas stood up and interposed,
And so the plague was stayed.**
- ³¹**And it was reckoned to him for righteousness,
To all generations forever.**

106:28-31 This strophe relates to Numbers 25. Israel became involved with the fertility worship of Moab. Idolatry was a major problem in Israel's history. I have included my notes from Deut. 18:10-11. See Special Topic: Fertility Worship of the ANE.

Deut. 18:10-11 There is a series of PARTICIPLES, which denote Canaanite idolatry:

1. NASB, "who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire" – BDB 716, KB 778, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE
2. NASB, "one who uses divination" – BDB 890, KB 1115, *Qal* PARTICIPLE (uses both VERB and NOUN)
NKJV, NET, "*one* who practices witchcraft"
NRSV, NJB, NIV, "who practices divination"
JPSOA, "an augur"
3. NASB, "one who practices witchcraft" – BDB 778 II KB 857, *Poel* PARTICIPLE
NKJV, NRSV, NJB, JPSOA, "a sooth sayer"
NIV, "sorcery"
NET, "an omen reader"
4. NASB, NKJV, NIV, "one who interprets omens" – BDB 638 II, KB 690, *Piel* PARTICIPLE
NRSV, NJB, "an augur"
JPSOA, "a diviner"
NET, "a soothsayer"
5. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NJB, JPSOA, NET, "a sorcerer" – BDB 506, KB 503, *Piel* PARTICIPLE
NIV, "engages in witchcraft"
6. NASB, "one who casts a spell" – BDB 287, KB 287, *Qal* PARTICIPLE (uses VERB and NOUN)
NKJV, "one who conjures spells"
NRSV, JPSOA, NIV, NET, "one who casts spells"
NJB, "weaver of spells"
7. NASB, NKJV, "one who inquires" (i.e., a medium) – BDB 981, KB 1371, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
NRSV, JPSOA, "consults ghosts"
NJB, "consulter of ghosts"
NIV, "medium"
NET, "one who conjures up spirits"
8. NASB, NKJV, NIV, "one who inquires" [assumed] (i.e., a spiritist) – BDB 981, KB 1371, *Qal* PARTICIPLE (assumed)
NRSV, "consults spirits"
NJB, "mediums"
JPSOA, "familiar spirits"
NET, "a practitioner of the occult"
9. NASB, NKJV, "one who calls up the dead"
 - a. BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
 - b. BDB 559, KB 562, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
 NRSV, "who seeks oracles from the dead"
NJB, NET, "necromancer"
JPSOA, "one who inquires of the dead"
NIV, "who consults the dead"

As you can see from the different English translations these words have some overlap. These terms seem to refer to different types of pagan worship practice, but their exact definitions are uncertain to modern Bible students. See a brief discussion in (1) *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pp. 524-528 and 608-610 and also (2) *Synonyms of the Old Testament* by Robert B. Girdlestone, pp. 296-302. The general picture is an attempt to know and manipulate the future for personal benefit. YHWH's people are to trust Him and serve Him. The old original sin of "me first" is the root of all of mankind's problems!

18:10 "who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire" This is a reference to the worship of the fertility god, *Molech*. In Israel the firstborn (cf. Exodus 13) was to be given to YHWH to serve Him. In Canaan the firstborn was to be sacrificed by fire to *Molech* in order to insure fertility, (cf. Deut. 12:31; Lev. 18:21). There is even one account in 2 Kgs. 21:6 where God's people worshiped this false god! It also possibly relates somehow to knowing the future (cf. 2 Kgs. 3:26:27). See Special Topic: *Molech*.

▣ **"divination"** This is from the Hebrew root for "divine" (BDB 890, cf. Num. 22:7; 23:23; Ezek. 21:21; 2 Kgs. 17:17). It is the general term describing several different methods, but all intent on determining the will of a deity by mechanical or natural means, such as examining the livers of sheep or casting arrows. It is based on the pagan worldview that there is information about the future hidden in natural events and that gifted humans (i.e., false prophets, e.g., Jer. 27:9; 29:8; Ezek. 13:9; 22:28) know it and influence this future.

▣ **"one who practices witchcraft"** This term (BDB 778 II, KB 857) is related to the term "cloud" (BDB 777). Linguists think the term is related to sound:

1. the hum of insects
2. sound of wind in the trees
3. unknown etymology (if cloud, then related to sight)

The parallel passage in Moses' writings which prohibits these same pagan practices is in Lev. 19:26-20:8 (see esp. 19:26). This same term is also found in Jdgs. 9:37; 2 Kgs. 21:6; 2 Chr. 33:6; Isa. 2:6; 57:3; Jer. 27:9; Micah 5:12.

▣ **"one who interprets omens"** The meaning of this term (BDB 638 II, KB 690) is uncertain. In Syrian it means "to murmur an obscure incantation" (KB 690). The root has several usages:

1. serpent – BDB 638 I
2. VERB in *Piel* only, (BDB 638 II) meaning :
 - a. practice divination
 - b. observe signs/omens
3. copper – bronze, BDB 638 III
4. unknown – BDB 638 IV

▣ **"a sorcerer"** This term (BDB 506, KB 503) basically means "to cut up" (1) as in the shredding of ingredients for a magical potion or (2) cutting oneself as a way of getting the deity's attention (i.e., Syrian usage, cf. 1 Kgs. 18:28). This term was used to describe Pharaoh's wise men in Exod. 7:11 and Nebuchadnezzar's wise men in Dan. 2:2.

18:11 "one who casts a spell" This literally is "to tie knots," "to be allied with," or "join together" (BDB 287, KB 287). In Psalm 58:5 and Eccl. 10:11 it refers to snake charming. A slightly different vocalization describes a Babylonian false wise man in Isa. 47:8-11.

▣ **“mediums”** The PARTICIPLE’s (BDB 981, KB 1371) basic meaning is to “ask” or “inquire.”

Here, to inquire of the spirit realm (e.g., YHWH, Jos. 9:14 or idols, Hosea 4:12).

The first NOUN, “medium” (BDB 15) is a difficult term to define. Some see the term as it is used in Lev. 19:31; 20:6,27 as (1) a pit or grave where spirits are lured, (2) form of “father” which refers to ancestor worship. It is translated in the LXX in Isa. 8:19 as “ventriloquist.” Because of this and Isa. 29:4 some think it means “to chirp” or “to mutter.” This would imply to “talk with a different voice.” However, from 1 Sam. 28:7-9, it is related to the ability to call or talk to someone in the ground or to communicate with the dead or spirits of the underworld, i.e., necromancy.

The second NOUN, “spiritists” (BDB 396) was a form of the Hebrew word “to know” (BDB 395). It refers to one who has knowledge of the spiritual realm or has contact with those in the spiritual realm who have knowledge (cf. Isa. 8:19; 19:3).

▣ **“one who calls up the dead”** This phrase is a combination of two *Qal* PARTICIPLES (BDB 205, KB 233, “to ask” and BDB 559, KB 562, “the dead ones”). In context it refers to mediums and “spiritists.” These elite, supposedly gifted, people contact the dead for information about the future and the power to affect it.

All ancient cultures believed in an afterlife. For many in the Ancient Near East this had two possibilities:

1. ancestor worship where the spirits of family members could affect the present and future
2. the power of physical (stars, forces of nature) or spiritual (demons, demigods) could be utilized to know and affect personal destinies

Ps. 106:28 “And ate sacrifices offered to the dead” The MT does not have the VERB “offered.” “The dead” (BDB 559, *Qal*, #1,d) is a *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, which may refer to the non-existent pagan idols (cf. Num. 25:2), not deceased humans (cf. Deut. 26:14). The TEV, NJB, and REB so translate it.

TEV – “dead gods”

NJB – “lifeless gods”

REB – “lifeless gods”

106:29 “their deeds” One wonders if there is a purposeful comparison of

1. the deeds of the Israelite idolaters, Ps. 106:29,39
2. the deeds of YHWH, Ps. 106:2,7,13,21-22

What a contrast!

106:31 “it was reckoned to him for righteousness” This is the exact phrase used of Abraham’s justification by faith in Gen. 15:6, quoted by Paul in Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6. The only difference in the VERB here (BDB 362, KB 359, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) and there (*Qal* IMPERFECT) is the verbal aspect. See full notes on Gen. 15:6 online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

Phinehas the priest’s actions are described in Num. 25:11-13. His actions, like Abraham’s, demonstrated his faith in YHWH.

106:31 “to all generations forever” Phinehas’ actions were an example of a true faithful follower. This testimony is preserved and continues to speak of his faith/faithfulness.

How we live influences people long after we die!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 106:32-33

³²**They also provoked *Him* to wrath at the waters of Meribah,
So that it went hard with Moses on their account;
³³Because they were rebellious against His Spirit,
He spoke rashly with his lips.**

106:32-33 This strophe reflects the events of Numbers 20. The Israelites angered Moses by their words at Meribah and he overreacted (cf. Num. 20:12; 27:14; Deut. 1:37; 3:26-27; 34:4). God is no respecter of persons; disobedience has consequences (cf. Gal. 6:7, see full note online).

106:33 “His Spirit” The NASB capitalizes “Spirit” (BDB 924), which implies YHWH’s Spirit, but the context obviously refers to Moses’ spirit (i.e., life force). In Ps. 106:33b the parallel line, “He” refers to Moses.

It may be a moot issue because it was God’s Spirit who was with Moses (cf. Num. 11:17; Neh. 9:20), Israel (cf. Num. 24:3), and both (cf. Isa. 63:10-14).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 106:34-39

³⁴**They did not destroy the peoples,
As the LORD commanded them,
³⁵But they mingled with the nations
And learned their practices,
³⁶And served their idols,
Which became a snare to them.
³⁷They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons,
³⁸And shed innocent blood,
The blood of their sons and their daughters,
Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan;
And the land was polluted with the blood.
³⁹Thus they became unclean in their practices,
And played the harlot in their deeds.**

106:34-39 This strophe reflects God’s words to Israel about interaction with the Canaanites (cf. Exod. 34:10-17; Deut. 7:1-6, 16; 20:16-18). The book of Joshua describes the defeat of the major walled cities of Canaan, but each tribe must finish the task of driving out the Canaanites from their own tribal allocations. They did not (i.e., Jdgs. 1:21, 27, etc.). The consequences are clearly stated in Num. 33:50-56!

106:35 “the nations” See Special Topic: Pre-Israelite Inhabitants of Palestine.

106:36 “Which became a snare” This word, “snare” (BDB 430), is a reference to an animal trap (lit. “bait” or “lure”). It was used metaphorically of the temptation to Canaanite fertility worship (cf. Exod. 23:33; Deut. 7:16; Jdgs. 2:3).

106:37-38 This refers to the worship of the fertility god, *Molech*.

SPECIAL TOPIC: *Molech*

106:37 “demons” This (BDB 993) refers to pagan gods (cf. Deut. 32:17). The word is used only twice in the OT. It is possibly a loan word from Aramaic. The concept of pagan idols as demons is seen in the NT in 1 Cor. 10:19-20 and Rev. 9:20.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Angels and Demons

106:38 “the land was polluted” The land of Canaan was polluted by the Canaanites (cf. Gen. 15:16) and now by the Israelites (cf. Num. 35:33-34; Jer. 3:2-10). Canaan belonged to YHWH. It was His land.

106:39 “played the harlot” This (BDB 275, KB 275, *Qal* IMPERFECT with *waw*) is a Hebrew idiom for idolatrous worship (cf. Jdgs. 2:17; Ezekiel 23; Hos. 5:3). It is based on the imagery of YHWH as Father and Israel as wife (cf. Hosea 1-3). To go after another god was viewed as “spiritual adultery” (cf. Exod. 34:15; Num. 15:39; Ps. 73:27; Hos. 4:12; 9:1). Sometimes the imagery is both figurative and literal because many/most of the fertility worship was by imitation magic (i.e., sexual activity in the name of and at the site of worship).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 106:40-43

⁴⁰**Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against His people**

And He abhorred His inheritance.

⁴¹**Then He gave them into the hand of the nations,**

And those who hated them ruled over them.

⁴²**Their enemies also oppressed them,**

And they were subdued under their power.

⁴³**Many times He would deliver them;**

They, however, were rebellious in their counsel,

And so sank down in their iniquity.

106:40-43 This is a summary of the periods of the exodus, wilderness wanderings, conquest, judges, and monarchy. The OT is a record of Israel’s inability to obey (cf. Galatians 3)!

Notice the powerful emotive words used to describe how YHWH reacted to Israel’s idolatry, rebellion, and unbelief.

1. the anger of the Lord was kindled against His people (cf. Deut. 1:34-35; 9:19)
2. He abhorred His inheritance (cf. Lev. 26:30; Deut. 32:19)
3. He gave them into the hand of. . . (i.e., Hebrew idiom of rejection), continued in different but parallel phrases in Ps. 106:41-42

106:42 “they were subdued” The AB (p. 75) mentions that the consonants of “Canaan” (BDB 488) are the same as this VERB (BDB 488, KB 484, *Niphal* IMPERFECT with *waw*). This may have been a purposeful sound play. Canaanite tribes subdued YHWH’s faithless tribes.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 106:44-46

⁴⁴**Nevertheless He looked upon their distress**

When He heard their cry;

⁴⁵And He remembered His covenant for their sake,
 And relented according to the greatness of His lovingkindness.
⁴⁶He also made them *objects* of compassion
 In the presence of all their captors.

106:44-46 This strophe shows the gracious response of YHWH.

1. He looked upon their distress (cf. Exod. 2:25; 5:7; Neh. 9:9)
2. He heard their cry (cf. Exod. 2:23-25; 3:7-9; Num. 20:16; Jdgs. 3:9; 6:7; 10:10; Neh. 9:27)
3. He remembered His covenant (cf. Exod. 2:24; Lev. 26:40,42,45; Ps. 105:8,42)
4. He relented according to the greatness of His lovingkindness (see full note at Gen. 6:6 online)
5. He made them objects of compassion (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:50; 2 Chr. 30:9; Ezra 9:9; Neh. 1:11; Jer. 42:12)
6. notice Ps. 106:43a, another gracious desire of YHWH

106:45 “covenant” See Special Topic: Covenant

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 106:47-48

⁴⁷Save us, O LORD our God,
 And gather us from among the nations,
 To give thanks to Your holy name
 And glory in Your praise.
⁴⁸Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
 From everlasting even to everlasting.
 And let all the people say, “Amen.”
 Praise the LORD!

106:47-48 These words are also found in 1 Chr. 16:35-36. This Psalm starts with praise to YHWH for His grace to faithful followers. But Israel has not been faithful! Now the psalmist prays for YHWH to act on their behalf and restore Israel from exile!

1. save us – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. 1 Chr. 16:35
2. gather us from the nations – BDB 867, KB 1062, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Deut. 30:3; Ps. 147:2; Isa. 11:12; 56:8; Ezek. 39:28

The purpose of the restoration is so that Israel can

1. give thanks to Your holy name – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
2. glory in Your praise – BDB 986, KB 1387, *Hithpael* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

106:48 “Blessed be the LORD” This VERB (BDB 138, KB 159, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) also occurs in Ps. 41:13; 72:18; 89:52. Israel is to bless their God because of who He is and what He has done for them.

Notice the covenant titles of Deity.

1. O LORD our God, Ps. 106:47
2. the LORD, the God of Israel, Ps. 106:48

▣ **“From everlasting even to everlasting”** See Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*).

▣ **“let all the people say, ‘Amen’”** The NASB translates this phrase as a JUSSIVE but it is a *Qal* PERFECT.

▣ **“Amen”** See Special Topic: Amen. Israel (i.e., “people”) is to affirm YHWH’s blessedness.

▣ **“Praise the LORD”** This Psalm ends the same as Psalm 105 and 104. This is liturgical phrasing that opens (i.e., Ps. 105:1) and closes (i.e., Ps. 105:45) many Psalms. It shows that they were read in worship settings.

“The LORD” is the shortened form of *Yah* (BDB 219).

Surprisingly this is missing in the LXX, but included in the Peshitta. It is surely possible that Ps. 106:48c-d serves as a doxological close to the fourth Book of the Psalter (i.e., Ps. 41:13; 89:52).

PSALM 107

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD Delivers Men from Manifold Troubles <u>No MT Intro</u>	Thanksgiving to the LORD for His Great Works of Deliverance	A Group Thanksgiving for Pilgrims	In Praise of God's Goodness	God, A Refuge in Every Danger
107:1-3	107:1-3	107:1-3	107:1-3	107:1 107:2-3
107:4-9	107:4-9	107:4-9	107:4-9	107:4-5 107:6-7 107:8-9
107:10-16	107:10-16	107:10-16	107:10-16	107:10-12 107:13-14 107:15-16
107:17-22	107:17-22	107:17-22	107:17-22	107:17-18 107:19-20 107:21-22
107:23-32	107:23-32	107:23-32	107:23-32	107:23-24 107:25-27 107:28-30 107:31-32
107:33-38	107:33-38	107:33-38	107:33-38	107:33-34 107:35-36 107:37-38
107:39-43	107:39-43	107:39-43	107:39-42 107:43	107:39-40 107:41-42 107:43

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There is a possible link between Psalms 105, 106, and 107 (i.e., same introductory phrase). Even though these are separated by a book division, their subject matter and terminology link them together. The LXX adds the characteristic opening of Book 1, “Hallelujah.”
 1. Psalm 105 deals with Israel’s experience of the exodus
 2. Psalm 106 leads up to the traumatic event of the Babylonian exile
 3. Psalm 107 speaks of restoration.
- B. It is important in interpreting the Psalms that we try to ascertain the historical setting. Psalm 107:1-3 helps us realize that this is God’s deliverance from Babylonian exile.
- C. There is a recurrent pattern in this Psalm, beginning in Ps. 107:4 and continuing through verse 32. There are several repeated similar refrains. One of them is, “They cried out to the LORD in their trouble,” Ps. 106:7,13,19,28. This phrasing is similar to the experience of Israel during the period of the Judges.
- D. Another recurring refrain is Ps. 107:8,15,21,31. This refrain focuses on the covenant loyalty of the God of Israel. This same special term, *hesed* (see Special Topic: Lovingkindness), begins and ends this Psalm. The theme of this wonderful Psalm is the steadfast, covenant loyalty of YHWH.
- E. There is a fourfold pattern of rescue. Some scholars think this relates to pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem, but this seems highly unlikely, especially because of pattern #4 in Ps. 107:23-31, which deals with doing business on the sea. A better understanding would be four metaphors of deliverance from crises:
 1. a caravan lost in the wilderness being found, Ps. 107:4-9
 2. prisoners in deep dungeons being released, Ps. 107:10-16
 3. illness to the point of death, but healing, Ps. 107:17-22
 4. those who experience a terrible storm at sea but are delivered, Ps. 107:23-31

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 107:1-3

- ¹Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
²Let the redeemed of the LORD *say so*,
 Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary
³And gathered from the lands,

**From the east and from the west,
From the north and from the south.**

107:1 “Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good” This is the same beginning as Psalm 106; 118; and 136 (i.e., BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE; it is the only IMPERATIVE in this Psalm). This is basically the faithful follower’s worldview. No matter what circumstances in which we may find ourselves, it is the deep conviction of those who believe the Bible that God is with us, God is for us, God is able to deliver us.

▣ **“For His lovingkindness is everlasting”** This is the covenant term *hesed* (see Special Topic: Lovingkindness ([*hesed*])). It primarily speaks of God’s steadfast, covenant loyalty. This Psalm begins and ends (cf. Ps. 107:43b) with God’s covenant love. God is not just the originator of covenants, He is the concluder of covenants

For “everlasting” see Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*).

107:2 “Let the redeemed of the LORD say so” This term is the Hebrew word *go’el* (BDB 145, KB 169, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE). It primarily emphasizes a rich relative buying someone back from slavery (see Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem). These personal family metaphors are used to describe God in the most intimate and significant of human relationships.

God’s people are called to speak forth God’s mercies. In context, this is another universal theme (cf. Ps. 107:8,15,21,31).

The word “say” (BDB 55, KB 65) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. This Psalm has eleven of these grammatical forms (i.e., Ps. 107:2, 8, 15, 21, 22 [twice], 32 [twice], 43 [twice]).

▣ **“Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary”** Because of Ps. 107:3 this refers to the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles. The prayer for restoration is found in Ps. 106:47 and Psalm 107 seems to be the fulfillment of that prayer.

For the idiom of “hand” see Special Topic: Hand.

107:3 “south” This is literally the word for “sea” (cf. JPSOA). The term “sea” (BDB 410) and the term “south” (lit. “right hand,” BDB 411 I) are spelled similarly in Hebrew. These are the four cardinal points of the compass, which would denote a universal restoration.

Most modern English translations emend “sea” to “south” because “the west” has already been mentioned. The UBS Text Project (p. 384) gives “sea” an “A” rating (very high probability). If the original text should be “sea” it refers to the islands of the Mediterranean where God’s people have been taken as prisoners/slaves.

Notice the “gathering” (BDB 867, KB 1062, *Piel* PERFECT) of YHWH’s redeemed in Psalm 107 is an answer to the prayer of Ps. 106:47 (BDB 867, KB 1062, *Piel* IMPERATIVE).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 107:4-9

⁴They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region;

They did not find a way to an inhabited city.

⁵They were hungry and thirsty;

Their soul fainted within them.

⁶Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble;

He delivered them out of their distresses.

⁷He led them also by a straight way,

To go to an inhabited city.

**⁸Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
And for His wonders to the sons of men!**

**⁹For He has satisfied the thirsty soul,
And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.**

107:4 “They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region” Some would say this is an obvious allusion to the exodus, however, the rest of the Psalm does not fit the exodus period. Therefore, I think this is the first of four circumstances that describe a crisis from which God delivers His people. See Contextual Insights, E.

▣ **“They did not find a way to an inhabited city”** This play on the term “inhabited city” is found in several parts of this Psalm (cf. Ps. 107:7, 36). It is possibly an allusion to Jerusalem and the Promised Land, but it primarily speaks of a place for travelers to find rest, provisions, and safety.

107:5 The word “soul” (“*nephesh*,” BDB 659, see note online at Gen. 35:18) denotes an air-breathing life force. It is used several times in this Psalm.

1. Ps. 107:5 – their soul fainted within them
2. Ps. 107:9 – the thirsty soul
3. Ps. 107:9 – the hungry soul
4. Ps. 107:18 – their soul abhorred food
5. Ps. 107:26 – their soul melted away

Each of these describes a person in distress and discouragement, at the point of death.

107:6,13,19,28 “they cried out to the LORD in their trouble” This pattern set up by God’s people in crises, crying out to Him and God delivering them, is reminiscent of the period of the Judges.

107:6 “He delivered them out of their stress” God’s deliverance is also paralleled in all four of these metaphorical situations (cf. Ps. 107:6-7; 13-14; 19-20; 28-29).

107:7 “He led them also by a straight way” This concept of a straight way reflects the Hebrew idiom of “the two ways” (cf. Deut. 30:15-20; Ps. 1:1; Matt. 7:13-14). A life of faith and faithfulness to YHWH is described as

1. a straight path
2. a level path
3. a smooth path
4. a path free of obstacles

The lifestyle of the wicked is just the opposite, filled with trouble and problems.

Isaiah often speaks of YHWH preparing a special path for His people’s return from exile (cf. Isa. 20:7; 35:7-8; 40:3-4; 42:15-16; 43:19-20; 49:10-11; 57:14; 62:10).

107:8 “Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness” The VERB (BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) occurs in Ps. 107:8,15,21,31. Here again is the repeated refrain of the wonderful covenant love of God manifested in the lives of His children. Even in times of distress, His faithfulness is sure (see Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God).

▣ **“And for His wonders to the sons of men”** Primarily this refers to the grace acts of God in delivering His people (cf. Ps. 107:24, see Special Topic: Wonderful Things). There are two ways to look at this phrase. One emphasizes God as a global sustainer of life, the God of providential care for all human beings. But, I think a better way of looking at this is that Israel was to be a witness to God’s acts to the world. This fits Ps. 107:2 best and the universal emphasis, so characteristic of many of the Psalms in this section of the Psalter. Israel was meant to be a kingdom of priests to lead the entire world to God. See Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan.

107:9 “For He has satisfied the thirsty soul” This can refer to the physical deliverance of God, for the particular event that those in Ps. 107:4-9 experienced, or it can be extrapolated to a wider spiritual sense. This Psalm, as a whole, can easily be generalized into the problems that all human beings face after Genesis 3 but uniquely the people of God, as they trust in the Lord and are delivered as a witness of God’s power and love to an unbelieving world.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 107:10-16

¹⁰There were those who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death,
Prisoners in misery and chains,
¹¹Because they had rebelled against the words of God
And spurned the counsel of the Most High.
¹²Therefore He humbled their heart with labor;
They stumbled and there was none to help.
¹³Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble;
He saved them out of their distresses.
¹⁴He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death
And broke their bands apart.
¹⁵Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
And for His wonders to the sons of men!
¹⁶For He has shattered gates of bronze
And cut bars of iron asunder.

107:10 “There were those who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death” The term “shadow of death” (BDB 853) is used in Psalm 23:4 and means “deep darkness” (BDB 161 CONSTRUCT BDB 853). It can be understood as a major crisis in life or someone at the point of death. In this particular case it is obvious that we are talking about prisoners held in the darkest, deepest dungeons.

This is the second of four possible scenarios of deliverance. See Contextual Insights, E.

107:11 “Because they had rebelled against the words of God” This is a very significant phrase. These crises that are overwhelming God’s people are not because of God’s lack of power or His lack of love, it is because of the people’s open-eyed rebellion against God (cf. Ps. 107:17,34). Although this is not stated in every one of the four possible scenarios, it is obvious that the problems experienced by Israel are related to their sin and rebellion against the covenant (cf. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30).

▣ **“the Most High”** This Psalm uses several names for Deity (see Special Topic: Names For Deity).

1. YHWH – Ps. 107:1,6,8,13,15,19,21,24,28,31,43
2. *El* – Ps. 107:11

3. Most High (*Elyon*, BDB 751) – Ps. 107:11

Number 3 is most often used by non-Israelites (cf. Gen. 14:19; Num. 24:15). Moses uses it in Deut. 32:8 (LXX) for YHWH's division of the earth into nations. Its usage in this Psalm adds to the evidence of the universal nature of this piece of literature.

107:12 “none to help” This little phrase is used often for the inability of any other deity to help (cf. 2 Kgs. 14:26; Ps. 22:11; 72:12; Isa. 63:5). YHWH is asserting that “There is no god but Me, and if you rebel against Me, there is no help. But if you respond to Me, there is no force on earth that can enslave you.” See Special Topic: Monotheism.

107:13 “they cried out to the LORD” See note at Ps. 107:6.

▣ **“He saved them out of distress”** This is the Hebrew word “saved” (BDB 446, KB 488, see Special Topic: Salvation [OT Term]). It primarily refers to physical deliverance in the OT. The term “saved” does take on spiritual aspects in the NT.

107:14 This repeats the physical salvation of these prisoners mentioned in Ps. 107:10.

107:15 This repeats the emphasis of Ps. 107:8. It is repeated again in 107:21 and 31 for emphasis.

The use of the phrase, “sons of men” (lit. “*ben Adam*”), has a universal component. YHWH, the Creator of humans in His likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), is also the redeemer of all humans (cf. Gen. 3:15, see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan). There is hope for Israel; there is hope for all!

107:16 “He shattered the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron asunder” In their day, these metal gates were the strongest possible human barrier. These are metaphorical for the strength and power of God that knows no barriers in helping His people (i.e., Isa. 45:1-2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 107:17-22

- ¹⁷**Fools, because of their rebellious way,
And because of their iniquities, were afflicted.**
¹⁸**Their soul abhorred all kinds of food,
And they drew near to the gates of death.**
¹⁹**Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble;
He saved them out of their distresses.**
²⁰**He sent His word and healed them,
And delivered *them* from their destructions.**
²¹**Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
And for His wonders to the sons of men!**
²²**Let them also offer sacrifices of thanksgiving,
And tell of His works with joyful singing.**

107:17 “were afflicted” This is a metaphor about a sickness unto death. However, this verbal form is a REFLEXIVE, not a PASSIVE, and it should be translated “they afflicted themselves” (BDB 776, KB 853, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT). It has been said that we do not break God's laws but that we break ourselves on God's laws. There is much truth in this statement about God's moral universe.

107:18 This is a way of speaking about a loss of appetite brought on by severe illness. In this verse *Sheol* is described as a fortress or city with gates (cf. Job 38:17). Quite often *Sheol* is personified or metaphoricalized in several different ways, but obviously we are speaking about death. See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead?

107:19 The phrase is repeated in Ps. 107:6,13,19, and 28. It is reminiscent of the period of the Judges.

107:20 “He sent His word and healed them” Notice here the Hebrew emphasis on the power of the spoken word. Much like Genesis 1, God spoke and it was accomplished. This same emphasis on the power of the word of God can be seen in Isa. 55:11. In the OT, when God spoke, His words became an independent, self-fulfilling existence.

The NOUN “destructions” (lit. “pits,” BDB 1005) is a rare root and is found in only three places in the OT.

1. here
2. Pro. 28:10
3. Lam. 4:20

It could refer to

1. the schemes and plans of enemies (animal traps)
2. death (*Sheol* as the pit)

107:21 This phrase is repeated in Ps. 107:8,15,21,31. See full note at Ps. 107:8.

107:22 This verse emphasizes temple worship in Jerusalem, as does Ps. 107:23. It is possible that 107:2a also reflects a temple activity.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 107:23-32

- ²³Those who go down to the sea in ships,
Who do business on great waters;
²⁴They have seen the works of the LORD,
And His wonders in the deep.
²⁵For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind,
Which lifted up the waves of the sea.
²⁶They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths;
Their soul melted away in *their* misery.
²⁷They reeled and staggered like a drunken man,
And were at their wits' end.
²⁸Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
And He brought them out of their distresses.
²⁹He caused the storm to be still,
So that the waves of the sea were hushed.
³⁰Then they were glad because they were quiet,
So He guided them to their desired haven.
³¹Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
And for His wonders to the sons of men!

³²Let them extol Him also in the congregation of the people,
And praise Him at the seat of the elders.

107:23 “Those who go down to the sea in ships” The Jews did not engage in seafaring activities very often. There is one example in 1 Kgs. 9:27,28, where Solomon built a fleet on the Gulf of Aqaba, but he was condemned because of this and the fact that the Phoenicians built and manned the ships. There is a veiled allusion to one of the Jewish tribes being involved in maritime activities in Jdgs. 5:17, but again, this is rather cryptic and uncertain in its meaning. The Jews simply did not engage in seafaring activity very much. The metaphorical background to Ps. 107:23-32 is a severe storm at sea, which would terrify desert dwellers.

This is the fourth hypothetical situation of deliverance; see Contextual Insights, E.

107:25-27 These are striking metaphorical examples of seasickness and fear associated with a storm at sea.

107:27 The VERB in line two is literally “swallowed” (BDB 118, *Hithapel* IMPERFECT), which denoted the sudden destruction of something (i.e., the sea swallowing a ship in a storm).

KB 135 III takes the root to be “to show oneself confused.” This would be the only example of this root in the *Hithpael*, though it gives

1. a *Niphal* in Isa. 28:7
2. a *Piel* in Isa. 3:12; 19:3
3. a *Pual* in Isa. 9:16

Several English translations see this VERB as relating to the experienced sailors’ inability to use their knowledge of the sea in order to escape.

107:30 “their desired haven” This is literally “desired city.” This term for “city” (BDB 562, KB 568) is found only here. Most English translations have “haven” or “harbor.” I think it parallels the “inhabited city” of Ps. 107:4 and 36. It was a place of rest, provision, and safety! It may contrast “the gates of death” (i.e., *Sheol*, the city of the dead). Ultimately only God is such a place! He is the only eternal city (cf. Heb. 11:10)!

107:32 “the congregation of the people” This is a characteristic covenant phrase for Israel.

▣ **“praised Him in the seat of the elders”** There has been some speculation that Ps. 107:33-43 contains

1. the peoples’ words to the elders
2. the elders’ response to their words

Whatever the exact nature of the following verses, it does not fit the fourfold pattern that has been established in Ps. 107:4-32.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 107:33-38

³³He changes rivers into a wilderness

And springs of water into a thirsty ground;

³⁴A fruitful land into a salt waste,

Because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it.

³⁵He changes a wilderness into a pool of water

And a dry land into springs of water;

³⁶And there He makes the hungry to dwell,

So that they may establish an inhabited city,
³⁷And sow fields and plant vineyards,
And gather a fruitful harvest.
³⁸Also He blesses them and they multiply greatly,
And He does not let their cattle decrease.

107:33-43 God's judgment is depicted and here has a purpose. That purpose is the restoration of God's people and their blessing. This is very similar to the blessing and cursing section of Lev. 26:1-13 and Deuteronomy 27-30.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 107:39-43

³⁹When they are diminished and bowed down
Through oppression, misery and sorrow,
⁴⁰He pours contempt upon princes
And makes them wander in a pathless waste.
⁴¹But He sets the needy securely on high away from affliction,
And makes his families like a flock.
⁴²The upright see it and are glad;
But all unrighteousness shuts its mouth.
⁴³Who is wise? Let him give heed to these things,
And consider the lovingkindnesses of the LORD.

107:40,41 “princes. . .the needy” The reversal of roles is one of the characteristic signs of God's ways with humans. Those leaders of Israel who led their people astray are now judged and the poor and ostracized of the community are now brought into a place of redemption, health, and security.

In some contexts “the afflicted” refers to YHWH's faithful followers.

107:43a This is similar to the NT phrase, “To him who has ears, let him hear.” God has revealed His plan for His people. Now His people must respond by faith. However, even with their faith response, the key is not their faithfulness, but God's faithfulness (cf. Ezek. 36:27-38).

107:43b This may refer to Deut. 32:7. Covenant obedience brings blessings (Ps. 107:33-38) but covenant disobedience brings cursings (cf Ps. 107:39-40).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why do some commentators believe that Psalms 105, 106, and 107 are related even though they are found in two different books (i.e., divisions) in the Psalter?
2. What is the significance of the Hebrew word *hesed*, translated “lovingkindness” in the New American Standard, “mercy” in King James, that is found so often in this Psalm?
3. What is the supposed historical setting of this Psalm based on Ps. 107:2,3?
4. Describe the fourfold pattern of distress found in Ps. 107:4-32. Do pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem face these literal problems, or are they somehow metaphorical relating to the problems of life?
5. Why are Ps. 107:11,17, and 34 so significant when relating to the problems faced by Israel?
6. How are sin and sickness related in the Jewish mind (cf. Ps. 107:17; John 9:2; James 5:13)?

PSALM 108

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God Praised and Supplanted to Give Victory <u>MT Intro</u> A Song, A Psalm of David	Assurance of God's Victory Over Enemies	A Liturgy of Prayer for Victory Over National Enemies	A Prayer for Help Against Enemies	Morning Hymn and National Prayer
108:1-6	108:1-4	108:1-4	108:1-4	108:1-2 108:3-4
	108:5-6	108:5-6	108:5-6	108:5 108:6
108:7-9	108:7-9	108:7-9	108:7-9	108:7 108:8 108:9
108:10-13	108:10-13	108:10-13	108:10-13	108:10-11 108:12-13

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Psalm 108:1-5 is taken from Psalm 57:7-11.
- B. Psalm 108:6-13 is taken from Psalm 60:5-12.
- C. For the exegetical details see the full notes online at Psalms 57 and 60.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 108:1-6

¹My heart is steadfast, O God;
I will sing, I will sing praises, even with my soul.
²Awake, harp and lyre;
I will awaken the dawn!
³I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the peoples,
And I will sing praises to You among the nations.
⁴For Your lovingkindness is great above the heavens,
And Your truth *reaches* to the skies.
⁵Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,
And Your glory above all the earth.
⁶That Your beloved may be delivered,
Save with Your right hand, and answer me!

108:1a “steadfast” This VERB (BDB 465, KB 464, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) denotes a life of faith and faithfulness (cf. Ps. 57:8 [twice]; 112:7) to God’s right path (cf. Ps. 16:11; 139:24). An example of someone who is not steadfast is given in Ps. 78:37.

The LXX, Peshitta, and Vulgate repeat the phrase, which shows that some assimilation between this Psalm and Ps. 57:7-11 has occurred.

For “heart” see Special Topic: Heart.

108:1b-3 The characteristics of a steadfast heart are

1. I will sing – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
2. I will sing praises – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
3. I will awaken the dawn – BDB 734, KB 802, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
4. I will give thanks – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
5. I will sing praises – same as #2

108:1b

NASB “even with my soul”
NKJV “even with my glory”
NRSV “awake my soul”
TEV “wake up my soul”
NJB “come my glory”

The NKJV is literal but NRSV, TEV, and NJB use the parallel in Ps. 57:8 to add the third use of the VERB “awake” (BDB 734, KB 802), which appears twice in the MT.

See Special Topic: Glory. Here the word (BDB 458) is used of the psalmist’s being (i.e., *nephesh*). This use of the term “glory” occurs in Ps. 7:5; 16:9; 30:12; 57:8.

The NET Bible (p. 979) suggests an emendation from כבוד (BDB 458) to “my life,” כחיי (BDB 458). It makes reference to AB, p. 94, but AB uses the quote by Anath to explain the VERB “exalt” used by YHWH and not as a support for the suggested emendation.

108:3 Notice the praise of YHWH extends to

1. the peoples

2. the nations
3. all the earth (cf. Ps. 108:5b)

The universal element so characteristic of the previous Psalms continues! YHWH is the one true God, the only Creator, the only Savior. See Special Topic: Monotheism.

108:4

NASB	“lovingkindness”
NKJV, LXX	“Mercy”
NRSV	“steadfast love”
TEV	“covenant love”
NJB	“faithful love”
JPSOA	“faithfulness”
REB	“unfailing love”

This is the special covenant NOUN (*hesed*) that described YHWH’s faithfulness to His promises. Mankind’s ultimate hope is in the merciful and faithful character of God! See Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*).

▣ **“above the heavens”** Notice the parallel with the next two lines. YHWH’s lovingkindness and truth (see Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT) reach above the heavens. Yea, YHWH Himself reaches above the physical creation (Ps. 108:5). The “heavens” are the atmosphere above the earth, not YHWH’s dwelling place. See Special Topic: Heaven and Special Topic: The Third Heaven.

108:5 “glory” See note at Ps. 108:1.

108:6 “Your beloved” Here, this refers to the covenant people (cf. Ps. 60:5; 127:2; Jer. 11:15). It came to be a title for the Messiah (especially from the Servant Songs of Isaiah, i.e., Isa. 42:1). YHWH refers to Jesus by this title

1. at His baptism – Matt. 3:17
2. in a quote from Isaiah – Matt. 12:18
3. at His transfiguration – Matt. 17:5

It later becomes a title of family endearment for those who follow Jesus (i.e., Rom. 1:7; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13).

▣ The first strophe has several IMPERATIVES.

1. awake, harp and lyre, Ps. 108:2 – BDB 734, KB 802, *Qal*
2. be exalted, O God, Ps. 108:5 – BDB 926, KB 1202, *Qal*
3. save, Ps. 108:6 – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil*
4. answer, Ps. 108:6 – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal*

Number 3 and 4 are prayer requests. Numbers 1 and 2 are related to praise.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 108:7-9

⁷God has spoken in His holiness:

**“I will exult, I will portion out Shechem
And measure out the valley of Succoth.**

⁸Gilead is Mine, Manasseh is Mine;

**Ephraim also is the helmet of My head;
Judah is My scepter.**

**⁹Moab is My washbowl;
Over Edom I shall throw My shoe;
Over Philistia I will shout aloud.”**

108:7-9 YHWH is speaking (several COHORTATIVES) from His temple (lit. “sanctuary”) about His ownership of Canaan. This strophe is from Ps. 60:6-8. Some of the strophes became slogans, catchphrases, or liturgy.

108:8 “Judah is My scepter” This is an allusion to Jacob’s blessing of his children in Genesis 49, especially Gen. 49:10. This is also mentioned in Num. 24:17 (cf. Ps. 60:7).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 108:10-13

**¹⁰Who will bring me into the besieged city?
Who will lead me to Edom?
¹¹Have not You Yourself, O God, rejected us?
And will You not go forth with our armies, O God?
¹²Oh give us help against the adversary,
For deliverance by man is in vain.
¹³Through God we will do valiantly,
And it is He who shall tread down our adversaries.**

108:10-13 Because YHWH is the owner and controller of the Promised Land (i.e., Canaan), surely He will not allow His people to be defeated and displaced!

108:10 “the besieged city” The MT has “fortified city” (BDB 747 CONSTRUCT BDB 131). This may refer to the city of Bozrah because Edom is mentioned in the next line of poetry. Bozrah (BDB 131 II) is from the same Hebrew root as “city” or “fortification” (BDB 131, see *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, p. 551).

108:11 The covenant people were defeated in battle (cf. Ps. 44:9) because YHWH did not accompany them. The ark was carried into battle as a symbol of YHWH’s personal presence with the soldiers. But if His people had proved unfaithful to the covenant, He would not give them the victory.

108:12 This is an acknowledgment that Israel’s only hope is YHWH. Their military might and battle strategies cannot bring victory, only YHWH can!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Who are the two speakers in this Psalm?
2. What other Psalms does this one draw from?

3. What is Ps. 108:7-9 trying to communicate?
4. What major truths are expressed in Ps. 108:11-12?

PSALM 109

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Vengeance Invoked Upon Adversaries <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Psalm of David	Plea for Judgment of False Accusers	Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Enemies (A Lament)	The Complaint of Someone in Trouble	An Imprecation
109:1-5	109:1-5	109:1-5	109:1-5	109:1-3 109:4-5
109:6-13	109:6-13	109:6-19	109:6-15	109:6-7 109:8-9 109:10-11 109:12-13
109:14-20	109:14-20		109:16-19	109:14-15 109:16-17 109:18-19
109:21-25	109:21-25	109:20-25	109:20-25	109:20-21 109:22-23 109:24-25
109:26-29	109:26-29	109:26-31	109:26-29	109:26-27 109:28-29
109:30-31	109:30-31		109:30-31	109:30-31

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The psalmist feels that he has been unfairly treated by those he loved (first strophe, Ps. 109:1-5).
1. their words
 - a. wicked, Ps. 109:1
 - b. deceitful, Ps. 109:1
 - c. lying, Ps. 109:2
 - d. words of hatred, Ps. 109:3
 - e. accuse, Ps. 109:4
 2. their acts
 - a. fought against me without cause, Ps. 109:3
 - b. repaid evil for good, Ps. 109:5
 - c. repaid hatred for love, Ps. 109:5
 3. this may reflect a court scene where the psalmist is falsely accused (cf. Ps. 109:6-7)
- B. He prays a series of judgments (JUSSIVES) on his adversaries (second and third strophe, Ps. 109:6-13, 14-20).
1. let an accuser stand at his right hand, Ps. 109:6 – BDB 763, KB 840, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 2. let him come forth guilty, Ps. 109:7 – BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 3. let his prayer become sin, Ps. 109:7 – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 4. let his days be few, Ps. 109:8 – same form as #3
 5. let another take his office, Ps. 109:8 – BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 6. let his children be fatherless, Ps. 109:9 – same as #3
 7. let his wife be a widow, Ps. 109:9 – same as #3
 8. let his children wander about, Ps. 109:10 – this is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 631, KB 681), which was a grammatical way to show intensity
 - a. beg – BDB 981, KB 1371, *Piel* PERFECT
 - b. seek sustenance – BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PERFECTThe NASB translates the PERFECTS of Ps. 109:10 as JUSSIVES (i.e., “let. .”).
 9. let the creditor seize all he has, Ps. 109:11 – BDB 669, KB 723, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 10. let strangers plunder the product of his labor, Ps. 109:11 – BDB 102, KB 117, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 11. let there be none to extend lovingkindness to him, Ps. 109:12 – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE
 12. let there not be any to be gracious to his fatherless children, Ps. 109:12 – same as #11
 13. let his posterity be cut off, Ps. 109:13 – same as #11
 14. let their name be blotted out, Ps. 109:13 – BDB 562, KB 567, *Niphal* JUSSIVE
 15. let the iniquity of his father be remembered, Ps. 109:14 – BDB 269, KB 269, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

16. do not let the sin of his mother be blotted out, Ps. 109:14 – BDB 562, KB 567, *Niphal* JUSSIVE
 17. let them be before the Lord continually, Ps. 109:15 – same as #3
 18. let the Lord cut off their memory, Ps. 109:15 – BDB 503, KB 500, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE
 19. let it be to him as a garment (i.e., cursing), Ps. 109:19 – same as #11
 20. NASB, NKJV, NJB translate Ps. 109:20a as another JUSSIVE but it is a *Qal* PARTICIPLE
- C. Psalm 109:16-18 lists the reasons why YHWH should judge him.
1. he did not remember to show lovingkindness, Ps. 109:16
 2. he persecuted the afflicted and needy man, Ps. 109:16
 3. he loved cursing, Ps. 109:17
 4. he clothed himself in cursing as a garment, Ps. 109:18
- D. In Psalm 109:21-25 the psalmist describes his need and asks for help (note the contrasting CONJUNCTION, “but for You, O God”).
1. deal kindly with me – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 2. deliver me – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
- He bases his prayers on
1. YHWH’s name sake, Ps. 109:21
 2. YHWH’s lovingkindness, Ps. 6:4; 44:26; 109:21,26; 119:149
 3. his need
 - a. I am afflicted and needy
 - b. my heart is wounded
 - c. I am passing like a shadow
 - d. I am shaken off like the locust
 - e. my knees are weak from fasting
 - f. my flesh has grown lean
 - g. I have become a reproach
- E. In Ps. 109:26-29 the psalmist continues his prayer and expresses his desire for YHWH’s judgment on his adversaries.
1. help me – BDB 740, KB 810, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 2. save me according to Your lovingkindness – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 109:21
 3. he prays for YHWH to
 - a. let them know their judgment is from Him – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - b. let them curse, but do not bless – BDB 886, KB 1103, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, which draws a reaction from YHWH (i.e., not to bless)
 - c. let them be ashamed – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (NKJV, NRSV), as there was a contrasting statement in Ps. 109:28a, so too, in 109:28c
 - d. let my accusers be clothed with dishonor – BDB 527, KB 519, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (NASB, NKJV, NRSV)
 - e. let them cover themselves with their own shame – BDB 741, KB 813, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (NASB, NKJV, NRSV)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 109:1-5

¹O God of my praise,
Do not be silent!
²For they have opened the wicked and deceitful mouth against me;
They have spoken against me with a lying tongue.
³They have also surrounded me with words of hatred,
And fought against me without cause.
⁴In return for my love they act as my accusers;
But I am in prayer.
⁵Thus they have repaid me evil for good
And hatred for my love.

109:1 “O God of my praise” This phrase is found only here and in Deut. 10:21, but the concept is recurrent (i.e., Psalm 146-148). The LXX translates this phrase as “O God do not pass over my praise in silence.”

▣ “Do not be silent” This is a Hebrew plea for YHWH to hear and respond to prayer (cf. Ps. 28:1; 35:22; 38:12; 83:1).

109:2-3 There is power in words both for blessing and for hurting. Our words reveal our hearts! See Special Topic: Human Speech.

The AB (p. 100) sees these verses as allusions to animal attacks.

1. mouth of attacking animals (cf. Ps. 22:14; Lam. 3:46-47)
2. “speaking” (BDB 180) in sense of “pursuing”
3. “surrounding” like a pack of animals

109:4-5 Being attacked is painful but being attacked by those you trusted and befriended is doubly painful (cf. Ps. 35:12; 38:20).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 109:6-13

⁶Appoint a wicked man over him,
And let an accuser stand at his right hand.
⁷When he is judged, let him come forth guilty,
And let his prayer become sin.
⁸Let his days be few;
Let another take his office.
⁹Let his children be fatherless
And his wife a widow.
¹⁰Let his children wander about and beg;
And let them seek *sustenance* far from their ruined homes.
¹¹Let the creditor seize all that he has,
And let strangers plunder the product of his labor.
¹²Let there be none to extend lovingkindness to him,
Nor any to be gracious to his fatherless children.

¹³Let his posterity be cut off;

In a following generation let their name be blotted out.

109:6-20 These two strophes sound so harsh to modern people. The psalmist is simply asking for the covenant curses (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30) on faithless Israelites to become a reality to his enemies. He feels he is on YHWH's side; to attack him is to attack YHWH.

The Jewish Study Bible (p. 1407) says this is the longest cursing section in the Psalter. It is so vivid and graphic that some commentators think it reflects what the enemies were saying against the psalmist (i.e., Jerome Bible commentary, NJB, and NIV footnote). However, this cannot be proven from the MT. The only evidence would be the SINGULAR form used in Ps. 109:6-19, which is probably a collective SINGULAR.

109:6 “an accuser” This is the Hebrew term (BDB 966, cf. Ps. 109:20,29) that came to be a title for personified evil, Satan. See Special Topic: Satan.

109:8 “office” It is uncertain from the context what this word (BDB 824) means. It can refer to “stored provisions,” cf. Isa. 15:7. The attacker had a place of prominence and power. This phrase (along with Ps. 69:25 from the LXX) is used in Acts 1:20 as referring to Judas Iscariot. Acts used the word “office” as relating to an election for Judas' replacement as an Apostle.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 109:14-20

**¹⁴Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD,
And do not let the sin of his mother be blotted out.**

**¹⁵Let them be before the LORD continually,
That He may cut off their memory from the earth;**

**¹⁶Because he did not remember to show lovingkindness,
But persecuted the afflicted and needy man,
And the despondent in heart, to put *them* to death.**

**¹⁷He also loved cursing, so it came to him;
And he did not delight in blessing, so it was far from him.**

**¹⁸But he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment,
And it entered into his body like water
And like oil into his bones.**

**¹⁹Let it be to him as a garment with which he covers himself,
And for a belt with which he constantly girds himself.**

**²⁰Let this be the reward of my accusers from the LORD,
And of those who speak evil against my soul.**

109:14-15 This may be an allusion to the two books (i.e., the book of deeds and the book of life) which symbolize God's memory. See Special Topic: The Two Books.

109:17-19 The curses referred to prayers for God to punish. The psalmist is asking for his persecutor's prayer for vengeance to be turned back on themselves. In the OT if one is found to be a false witness in court, he bears the punishment of the one falsely accused.

109:20 This is a summary conclusion to Ps. 109:6-19. It could go with 109:6-19 (i.e., NASB, NKJV) or with the next strophe (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 109:21-25

- ²¹**But You, O God, the Lord, deal *kindly* with me for Your name's sake;
Because Your lovingkindness is good, deliver me;**
- ²²**For I am afflicted and needy,
And my heart is wounded within me.**
- ²³**I am passing like a shadow when it lengthens;
I am shaken off like the locust.**
- ²⁴**My knees are weak from fasting,
And my flesh has grown lean, without fatness.**
- ²⁵**I also have become a reproach to them;
When they see me, they wag their head.**

109:21 “for Your name's sake” This is a recurrent theme (cf. Ps. 23:3; 25:11; 31:3; 79:9; 106:8). The name represents the person. See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

109:24 This verse can be interpreted in two ways (see UBS *Handbook*, p. 944).

1. the psalmist has been voluntarily fasting
2. the psalmist has had no
 - a. good food
 - b. olive oil for anointing

109:25 “they wag their head” This was a gesture of contempt (cf. 2 Kgs. 19:21; Job 16:4; Ps. 22:7; Isa. 37:22; Jer. 18:16; 48:27; Lam. 2:15; Matt. 27:39; Mark 15:29).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 109:26-29

- ²⁶**Help me, O LORD my God;
Save me according to Your lovingkindness.**
- ²⁷**And let them know that this is Your hand;
You, LORD, have done it.**
- ²⁸**Let them curse, but You bless;
When they arise, they shall be ashamed,
But Your servant shall be glad.**
- ²⁹**Let my accusers be clothed with dishonor,
And let them cover themselves with their own shame as with a robe.**

109:27 This is a typical OT role reversal motif. The psalmist wants to be vindicated by YHWH in the presence of his enemies (cf. Ps. 23:5).

109:28 “Your servant” The NOUN “servant” (BDB 713) can be used of

1. a slave

2. subjects of a king
3. worshipers (cf. Deut. 32:36,43)
4. Levite singers (cf. Ps. 113:1; 134:1; 135:1)
5. Israel (cf. Isa. 41:8-9)
6. BDB 714, #6, suggests the usage here is simply a polite address to God (cf. Ps. 19:11,13; 27:9; 31:16; 35:27; 69:17; 143:2)
7. NASB Study Bible (p. 856) sees it as a reference to the Davidic Messiah (cf. Ps. 78:20; Isa. 42:1)
8. special title for leaders
 - a. Abraham – Gen. 26:24
 - b. Isaac – 24:14
 - c. Jacob – Ezek. 28:25; 37:25
 - d. Moses – Num. 12:7; Deut. 34:5
 - e. Joshua – Jos. 24:29 (after his death)
 - f. David – 2 Sam. 3:18; 7:5,8,26

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 109:30-31

³⁰**With my mouth I will give thanks abundantly to the LORD;**

And in the midst of many I will praise Him.

³¹**For He stands at the right hand of the needy,**

To save him from those who judge his soul.

109:30-31 The psalmist praises YHWH for His faithfulness and justice.

1. I will give thanks abundantly to the LORD – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. I will praise Him – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

109:31 “For He stands at the right hand of the needy” This is in direct contrast to the wicked accuser of Ps. 109:6. This same phrase is used of Satan in Zech. 3:1.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What does God’s silence imply?
2. List the actions of the wicked.
3. Why do many commentators think the enemies were close friends?
4. How does one explain the desire for violence against another person?
5. How is Ps. 109:14 related to the concept of the book of life?

PSALM 110

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD Gives Domination to the King <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David	Announcement of the Messiah's Reign	The LORD Promises Victory to His King (A Royal Psalm)	The LORD and His Chosen King	The Priest Messiah
110:1-3	110:1-2	110:1 110:2-4	110:1-3	110:1 110:2 110:3
110:4-7	110:3-4 110:5-7	110:5-7	110:4 110:5-7	110:4 110:5-7

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. It is difficult to interpret this Psalm because we do not know the exact historical setting. There is some evidence from the non-original, non-inspired title of this Psalm, "A Psalm of David." Jesus' affirmation of this in Matt. 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44; and many other places in the NT, shows not only the significance of this Psalm, but also the historical setting sometime in David's life. This Psalm is quoted in the NT more than any other Psalm (i.e., it is viewed as Messianic and directly referring to Jesus in an eschatological setting). Some have assumed that the best historical setting in David's life is his response to God's wonderful, marvelous promise in 2 Sam. 17:12-16. Others have assumed these are David's words in his old age after Solomon was coronated king. The reason for this is that David calls him, "my lord," which would be highly unusual.
- B. Another key in interpreting the Psalms, besides historical setting, is to find the logical progress/process of the author's thoughts—for us as westerners, this is done by outlining

paragraph divisions. These literary units are not inspired, but they help us to try to find the logical and literary link between verses. The New American Standard Bible (NASB) and the New International Version (NIV) divide this Psalm into verses 1-3 and 4-7. However, the Revised Standard Version (RSV) divides it into verses 1-4 and 5-7. The new translation by the Jewish Publication Society of America (JPSOA) divides this Psalm into verse 1 by itself, then parallel couplets: verses 2 and 3, 4 and 5; 6 and 7. It seems to be that Dr. Kidner, *OT Tyndale Commentary Series*, has the best possible structure of this Psalm. He asserts there are two quotes by God: verses 1 and 4. Then the conflict caused by God's statements are described in verses 2 and 3 and 5-7. Ps. 110:5-7 does not really relate to 110:9, but rather relates to 110:2 and 3.

C. Places in the NT that quote or allude to Psalm 110.

1. Ps. 110:1a – Matt. 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42,43; Acts 2:34,35; Heb. 1:13
2. Ps. 110:1b – Matt. 26:64; Acts 7:55,56; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2
3. Ps. 110:1c – 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:22; Heb. 10:13
4. Ps. 110:4 – Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:17,21
5. Ps. 110:5c – Rom. 2:5; Rev. 6:17

D. Two of the most difficult verses in Hebrew are Ps. 110:3 and 7. Thank goodness they do not have a significant place in the overall interpretation of this Psalm. Please check the translations available to you to note the wide differences that have been employed by translators to catch the essence of these difficult Hebrew verses.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 110:1-3

¹The LORD says to my Lord:

“Sit at My right hand

Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

²The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, *saying*,

“Rule in the midst of Your enemies.”

³Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power;

In holy array, from the womb of the dawn,

Your youth are to You *as* the dew.

110:1 “The LORD says” Notice the word “LORD” is in all caps, therefore, it refers to the covenant name for God, YHWH, which is a form of the Hebrew VERB, “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14, see Special Topic: Names For Deity). It is the Covenant God who speaks.

▣ **“to my Lord”** The second term for Lord has only a capital “L” and, therefore, reflects the Hebrew *Adonai* (“my Lord”). The Hebrew NOUN (BDB 101) means “owner,” “husband,” “lord,” “master.” It is obvious that this is a reference to the Messiah (see Special Topic: Messiah).

▣ **“Sit”** This term “sit” (BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) has been seen in different ways. It looks as if, in context, it refers to the place of honor beside YHWH’s throne. If that is the context, we are speaking

of a co-ruler with YHWH, and if that is true, this is a strong implication of deity. See Special Topic: The Trinity and Special Topic: The Deity of Christ from the OT.

If “sit” refers to the finished work of the priest/king, which seems to be an allusion drawn in Heb. 1:2-3; 10:12-13, then the “sit” is a reference to a finished sacrificial work and the reign of the Messiah/High Priest (cf. Zechariah 3-4).

▣ **“at My right hand”** This is an anthropomorphic phrase speaking of the strongest arm of the human body. Most human beings are right-handed, therefore, that arm is used as a symbol of honor, power, authority, or preeminence. See Special Topic: God Described As Human.

▣ **“until”** This PREPOSITION (BDB 723 III) is a rather problematic word for me because it seems to imply that this place of honor and power at God’s right hand is limited in time until some events happen, but it has a wide semantic usage. The Messiah’s reign will turn into the Father’s reign (cf. 1 Cor. 25:24-25).

However, this same Hebrew consonantal term can be revocalized as the word, “seat.” In this sense, the VERB “make” would have two ACCUSATIVES or OBJECTS, “seat” and “footstool.” We learn from Assyrian wall paintings and carvings that the throne and table of the king rest on the backs of slaves and that may be the allusion to this phrase in Ps. 110:1.

▣ **“a footstool for Your feet”** Again, this is an obvious ancient Oriental metaphor for victory over enemies (cf. Jos. 10:24).

110:2 “The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion” There have been several ways to translate this verse, but it is obvious that we are speaking of the universal reign of YHWH, moving from Jerusalem in concentric circles, to encompass all the world. There are numerous OT allusions to this event. This seems to be speaking of a reign of the Messiah as YHWH’s representative.

The term “scepter” (BDB 641) originally referred to something made from wood.

1. a club for war
2. a staff for shepherding

It came to symbolize rule and authority. In a context of YHWH’s reign, it may still refer to YHWH’s authority and power through a representative leader (i.e., Moses’ staff, cf. Exodus 4; 7).

▣ **“Rule in the midst of Your enemies”** The VERB “rule” (BDB 921 I, KB 1190, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is an extremely strong term (i.e., “have dominion,” cf. Dan. 7:13-14). This is similar to Psalm 2 (especially Ps. 2:9). Psalm 2 has much in common with Psalm 110.

1. both involve YHWH and His Messiah
2. both involve conflict with the empires of the world

110:3 “Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power” Notice the contrast in how the Messiah will deal with His enemies and how the Messiah’s people will rally to His cause. This is similar to the volunteer army of Jdgs. 5:2. This phrase, “will volunteer freely,” is primarily used for the freewill gift

1. for building the tabernacle or later temple
2. of sacrifices at the temple

This may be an allusion to Rom. 12:1, where believers give their bodies as a living sacrifice to God. This is a beautiful picture of the dedication of God’s people to the Messiah.

The UBS Text Project (p. 393) suggests a change in the vowels to form

1. “you were endowed with princely gifts” – NEB
2. “You gain the homage of your people” – REB

However, UBS gives this option only a “C” rating (considerable doubt). The JPSOA translates the phrase as “Your people come forward willingly on your day of battle,” which follows the MT.

▣ **“in holy array”** There have been two different ways to look at this verse. “Holy array” is the translation followed by the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Septuagint (LXX). However, some translations change a Hebrew “d” to an “r” and translate it “the mountains of holiness,” and this is followed by the Symmachus translation of the Hebrew, Jerome’s translation, and the RSV. The UBS Text Project (p. 394) gives this option a “C” rating (considerable doubt).

▣ **“the womb of the dawn”** It is uncertain if this is a description of

1. the Messiah Himself
2. His army
3. a metaphor of abundance and eternity

As the dew comes with the dawn every morning in such abundance in parts of Palestine, many commentators have asserted that this is a metaphor for abundance.

This is a difficult verse.



NASB “Your youth”

NKJV, NJB,

REB “of Your youth”

NRSV “your youth will come to you”

JPSOA “of youth”

LXX “I brought you forth”

The UBS Text Project (p. 396) suggests a change of vowels that results in “I have begotten you” (cf. LXX, Peshitta, Vulgate; see NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 124, #11), but gives the suggestion a “C” rating (considerable doubt), yet chooses it over the MT. The LXX takes לָדַתִּי as a form of the VERB יָלַד (BDB 408) “to bear” or “bring forth.” “Youth” is a derivative of this VERB, יְלֹדֶת (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 455).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 110:4-7

⁴The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind,

“You are a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek.”

⁵The Lord is at Your right hand;

He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath.

⁶He will judge among the nations,

He will fill *them* with corpses,

He will shatter the chief men over a broad country.

⁷He will drink from the brook by the wayside;

Therefore He will lift up *His* head.

110:4 “The LORD has sworn” The VERB (BDB 989, KB 1396) is a *Niphal* PERFECT. This is a very strong way of asserting that what God is saying is true and will be always be true! Please read Heb. 6:16-18, where God says the two unchangeable things are His promises and His oath. Our basic trust is in the trustworthiness of God; when He speaks and promises, what He says is trustworthy.

“Sworn” in Ps. 110:4 parallels “says” in 110:1.

▣ **“and will not change His mind”** This is another anthropomorphic phrase (lit. “be sorry,” BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) using the analogy of human repenting or relenting to describe what God will not do (cf. Heb. 7:21).

The subject is obviously YHWH. One wonders if the other PRONOUNS of Ps. 110:5-7 refer to victorious, powerful YHWH or His earthly representative (i.e., the king of His covenant people).

▣ **“You are a priest forever**

According to the order of Melchizedek” The Jewish Publication Society of America (JPSOA) has translated this, “you are a priest forever, a righteous king by my decree.” The “order of Melchizedek” has been understood in several ways.

1. his name means, “king of righteousness”
2. his city was seen, i.e., Jerusalem
3. he is the only person in the OT who is both king and priest

The NT discussion about Melchizedek is found in Hebrews (cf. Heb. 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:1,10,11,15,17). The OT account is found in Gen. 14:18-20. Melchizedek is used because Abraham paid tithes to him (i.e., Gen. 14:20), therefore, in Jewish reckoning, he is a superior priesthood to the Jewish priesthood (see Special Topic: Melchizedek).

1. he is from the key city
2. he has the right name
3. he holds the right position: priest/king

▣ Notice the use of the word “forever” (see Special Topic: Forever ([*‘olam*])). This implies an eschatological setting, person, and victory! If the NT is inspired (and it is!), this Psalm refers specifically to Jesus of Nazareth!

110:5 “The Lord is at Your right hand” This is different imagery from Ps. 110:1b. I think there is no real theological significance in the variation. It simply means that the Messiah will be empowered, supported, and encouraged by YHWH Himself (cf. Ps. 110:4).

110:5,6c “He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath” The kings are used here as a way of referring to God’s victory over the armies of the Gentiles (note, “kings, 110:5; “the nations,” 110:6; “the chief men,” 110:7 imply universal imagery; NRSV has “wide earth” in 110:6c). This same eschatological confrontation can be seen in Psalm 2 and Revelation 19:11-21.

110:6 “He will judge among the nations” This alludes to an eschatological setting. Again, it is God dealing with the whole world, both in judgment and, though it is implied and not stated, in mercy.

110:7 This verse is difficult in Hebrew, so difficult that some scholars have asserted that we have lost a part of the text. Whatever the exact meaning, it is obviously a symbol of victory (i.e., God’s defeat of all those who oppose Him). The metaphor seems to be drawn from the idea of a fleeing, defeated foe and a pursuing victor having time to refresh himself at the water crossings, therefore, renewing his strength. The other possible interpretation of, “to lift the head,” is found in Ps. 3:3 and 27:6, where it is God’s Messiah as righteous Judge who lifts the head of His people, so as to acknowledge them. Whichever allusion is meant, (1) the strength and virility of the Messiah or (2) His act of mercy toward His own people at the defeat of all opposition, is textually uncertain.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did both Jesus and His Apostles quote this Psalm more often than any other?
2. What is the significance of a direct quote by God in Ps. 110:1 and 4?
3. Where in this Psalm do we find the allusion to the Messiah as prophet, priest, and king?
4. Why have there been so many different translations of Ps. 110:3 and 7?

PSALM 111

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD Praised for His Goodness <u>No MT Intro</u>	Praise to God for His Faithfulness and Justice	Hymn of Praise to the LORD for His Great Deeds	In Praise of the LORD	In Praise of Yahweh's Deeds
111:1-6	111:1	111:1-10	111:1a 111:1b-3	111:1a 111:1b-2
	111:2-6		111:4-6	111:3-4 111:5-6
111:7-10	111:7-9		111:7-10	111:7-8 111:9-10
	111:10			

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Psalms 111 and 112 are acrostic, wisdom psalms. Each line of poetry begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The acrostic starts at Ps. 111:1b.
- B. These two Psalms are also linked by the phrase, "His righteousness endures forever," which occurs in the Psalter only in Ps. 111:3 and Ps. 112:3,9.
- C. Psalm 111 praises YHWH, while Psalm 112 praises the faithful followers of YHWH.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 111:1-6

¹Praise the LORD!

I will give thanks to the LORD with all *my* heart,
In the company of the upright and in the assembly.

²Great are the works of the LORD;

They are studied by all who delight in them.

³Splendid and majestic is His work,

And His righteousness endures forever.

⁴He has made His wonders to be remembered;

The LORD is gracious and compassionate.

⁵He has given food to those who fear Him;

He will remember His covenant forever.

⁶He has made known to His people the power of His works,

In giving them the heritage of the nations.

111:1 “Praise the LORD” This is the translation of the Hebrew, “hallelujah.” It is made up of the VERB “praise” (BDB 237 II, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERATIVE) and “Yah” (BDB 219). It denotes a worship setting and is used liturgically at the beginning or ending of many Psalms (i.e., Ps. 102:18; 104:35; 105:45; 106:1,48; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1,9; 115:17,18; 116:19 and twenty-one more times).

The liturgical aspect is confirmed by Ps. 111:1c.

This first line is not part of the acrostic but serves as a title to this Psalm.

▣ **“LORD”** This is the covenant name for Israel’s God. See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

▣ **“I will give thanks to the LORD”** Notice the parallel with line 1, different form but same concept.

1. hallelujah – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
2. give thanks – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

▣ **“with all *my* heart”** This is a Hebrew idiom of complete dedication (cf. Ps. 9:1; 86:12; 138:1). For “heart” see Special Topic: Heart.

▣ **“In the company of the upright and in the assembly”** This phrase could refer to

1. one group of worshipers at the temple
2. two groups (cf. Ps. 107:32)
 - a. a group of leaders (cf. Exod. 3:16)
 - b. the large worshipping group

111:2-6 Notice the parallel between

1. great are the works of the Lord, Ps. 111:2a
2. splendid and majestic is His work, Ps. 111:3a (cf. Ps. 96:6; 104:1)
3. his wonders to be remembered, Ps. 111:4a
4. He has made known to His people the power of His works, Ps. 111:6a

See Special Topic: Wonderful Things to see the different ways that YHWH has revealed Himself through His acts and words.

111:2b As a teacher/preacher, the phrase speaks so strongly to me “God’s revelations are available to all but must be studied/pondered and applied” (cf. Ps. 111:10b; Ezra 7:10)! Do you delight in them, live them, teach them?

111:3b “His righteousness endures forever” This phrase is repeated in Ps. 112:3,9, and nowhere else in these exact words. This implies that Psalms 111 and 112 were written by the same person.

For the recurrent concept of YHWH’s righteousness see the Special Topic: Righteousness.

The PARTICIPLE “endures” (BDB 763, KB 840) is also used of God’s revelation in Ps. 19:9. Jesus addresses the OT’s inspiration and eternality in Matt. 5:17-19!

111:4b One of the crucial questions after belief in God is, what is He like? What is His nature? This phrase reflects the OT characterization of the God of Israel (cf. Exod. 34:6-7; Num. 14:18; Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8). See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God.

111:5-6 These verses describe some of the things God has done.

1. gives food to those who fear/awe Him (i.e., Exodus and Numbers; Matt. 6:11,31-33)
2. remembers His covenant forever (i.e., this refers to His promises to the Patriarchs, cf. Genesis 12:15; 18; 22; Ps. 105:8; see Special Topic: Covenant)
3. made Himself known to His people (cf. Ps. 19:7-12)
4. gives His people the nations for an inheritance
 - a. in a Messianic sense in Ps. 2:8; 67:7
 - b. in a conquest of Canaan sense in Gen. 15:12-21

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 111:7-10

⁷**The works of His hands are truth and justice;**

All His precepts are sure.

⁸**They are upheld forever and ever;**

They are performed in truth and uprightness.

⁹**He has sent redemption to His people;**

He has ordained His covenant forever;

Holy and awesome is His name.

¹⁰**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;**

A good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*;

His praise endures forever.

111:7-10 This strophe affirms the trustworthiness of God and His revelation/promises. It foreshadows Psalm 119 and reflects Psalm 19.

Notice the ways God’s revelations are described.

1. truth and justice (cf. Ps. 19:9)
2. sure (cf. Ps. 19:7; 93:5)
3. upheld forever and ever (cf. Ps. 19:9)
4. performed in truth and uprightness

Notice the ways God Himself is described.

1. He sent redemption to His people
2. He ordained His covenant forever
3. He is holy and awesome

Notice the different words used to describe His revelations.

1. precepts – BDB 824 (cf. Ps. 19:8)
2. commanded – BDB 845 (cf. Ps. 19:8; using the NOUN, BDB 846)
3. fear – BDB 432 (cf. Ps. 19:9)

See Special Topic: Terms Used For God’s Revelation.

111:7 “His hands” See Special Topic: God Described As Human (anthropomorphism).

▣ **“truth”** This feminine NOUN (BDB 54) occurs in Ps. 111:7 and 8. It is literally “faithfulness.” The same Hebrew root (BDB 54) forms the word “sure” (BDB 52, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) in Ps. 111:7 (cf. Ps. 19:7). See Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT.

111:8 “forever and ever” This Hebrew idiom of permanence is formed by

1. forever – BDB 723 I (cf. Ps. 111:3,8; 112:3,9)
2. and ever – BDB 761 (cf. Ps. 111:9; 19:9; see Special Topic: Forever [‘*olam*])

111:9 “redemption” See Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem

▣ **“holy”** “Holy” (BDB 872) and “awesome” (BDB 431) appear together in Ps. 99:3. See Special Topic: Holy.

▣ **“awesome”** This is the common Hebrew VERB “to fear” (BDB 431, KB 432, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE). It is used

1. of YHWH Himself – Deut. 7:21; 10:17,21; Neh. 1:5; 4:14; 9:32; Ps. 47:2; 68:35; 76:7; Dan. 9:4
2. of His acts – Ps. 65:5; 66:3,5; 106:22; 145:6
3. of the appropriate response of His people – Deut. 4:10; 5:5; 6:2,13,24; 10:12,20; 13:11; 14:23; 17:13,19; 19:20; 21:21; 25:18; 28:58; 31:12; Jos. 4:24
4. of the Gentiles – Deut. 28:10; Jos. 4:24; 9:24; Ps. 67:7

111:10a This is the first principle and the central theme of Proverbs (cf. Pro. 1:7; 9:10), also note online at Eccl. 12:13.

111:10b Notice that knowing God’s revelation demands obeying it/them! Biblical faith is not only a theological creed to be affirmed but a lifestyle (cf. Matt. 7:13-27; Eph. 2:8-9,10).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What “company” is being addressed in Ps. 111:1c?
2. Does the Psalm tell us exactly which “works of the Lord” are being extolled?
3. How is Ps. 111:4b related to Exod. 34:6-7?

PSALM 112

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prosperity of the One who Fears the LORD <u>No MT Intro</u>	The Blessed State of the Righteous	The Contrasting Fate of the Righteous and the Wicked (Wisdom Psalm)	The Happiness of a Good Person	Praise of the Upright
112:1-6	112:1a 112:1b-d 112:2-8	112:1-3 112:4-10	112:1a 112:1b-3 112:4-6	112:1a 112:1b-2 112:3-4 112:5-6
112:7-9	112:9-10		112:7-10	112:7-8 112:9
112:10				112:10

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. See Contextual Insights of Psalm 111 for the obvious connections between Psalms 111 and 112.
- B. Psalm 111 praises YHWH but Psalm 112 praises the faithful follower (cf. Psalm 128).
 1. he fears the Lord, Ps. 112:1b
 2. he delights in His revelations, Ps. 112:1c (cf. Ps. 1:2)
 3. his descendants will be mighty on earth, Ps. 112:2a
 4. they will be blessed, Ps. 112:2b
 5. they are prosperous, Ps. 112:3a

6. his righteousness endures forever, Ps. 112:3b
7. he and his family have light in darkness, Ps. 112:4a
8. he is gracious, Ps. 112:4b,5a,9a
9. he is compassionate, Ps. 112:4b
10. he is upright, Ps. 112:4b
11. he conducts his officers with justice, Ps. 112:5b
12. he will never be shaken, Ps. 112:6a
13. he and his family as righteous people will be remembered forever, Ps. 112:6b
14. he will not fear evil tidings, Ps. 112:7a
15. his heart is steadfast (cf. Ps. 57:8; 108:1), trusting in the Lord, Ps. 112:7b (cf. Isa. 26:3)
16. his heart is steady, BDB 701, KB 759, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE (i.e., by God), Ps. 112:8a
17. he will not fear, Ps. 112:8a
18. his enemies will be defeated before him, Ps. 112:8b, 10a
19. his righteousness endures forever, Ps. 112:9b
20. his horn will be exalted in honor, Ps. 112:9c (cf. Ps. 75:10)

- C. By contrast the wicked will experience the exact opposite. Their fate is specifically mentioned in Ps. 112:10.
1. the wicked will see the blessing of the righteous and be vexed
 2. they will gnash their teeth
 3. they will melt away
 4. their desire will perish

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 112:1-6

¹Praise the LORD!

**How blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
Who greatly delights in His commandments.**

**²His descendants will be mighty on earth;
The generation of the upright will be blessed.**

**³Wealth and riches are in his house,
And his righteousness endures forever.**

**⁴Light arises in the darkness for the upright;
He is gracious and compassionate and righteous.**

**⁵It is well with the man who is gracious and lends;
He will maintain his cause in judgment.**

**⁶For he will never be shaken;
The righteous will be remembered forever.**

112:1 “Praise the LORD” See note at Ps. 111:1.

▣ **“How blessed is the man. . .”** This is Wisdom vocabulary.

1. blessed (TEV, “happy”), Ps. 112:1 – BDB 80 (cf. Ps. 1:1; 119:1-2)
2. blessed, Ps. 112:2 – BDB 138
3. well (TEV, “happy”), Ps. 112:5 – BDB 373 II

▣ **“fears the LORD”** See note at Ps. 111:10. See Special Topic: Fear.

▣ **“Who greatly delights in His commandments”** The VERB (BDB 342, KB 339, *Qal* PERFECT) denotes a person’s attitude toward YHWH’s revelation (cf. Ps. 19:10; 111:2; 119:35). The faithful follower obeys them (cf. Deut. 4:1-2,14,40; 16:12; 30:8,16,19-20).

For “commandments” see the Special Topic: Terms For God’s Revelation.

112:2 From the Ten Commandments we learn that evil moves through generations (cf. Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9,10) but, praise God, so does faith (cf. Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9; Exod. 34:7).

112:3a Remember, this is an OT text, the “two ways” of the Mosaic covenant (cf. Deut. 30:15-20; Psalm 1; Pro. 4:10-19; Jer. 21:8; Matt. 7:13-14). This did not work because of mankind’s fallen nature (cf. Genesis 3; Romans 1-3; Galatians 3; Hebrews). Be careful of proof-texting these verses on prosperity as if they were NT promises!

112:4a This phrase implies that the faithful follower will have understanding amidst the problems of this fallen age because

1. he fears YHWH, Ps. 112:1b,7b
2. he delights in His revelation, Ps. 112:1c
3. he lives out his faith, Ps. 112:4b-5
4. he will not be shaken, Ps. 112:6a
5. he does not fear, Ps. 112:8a

▣ The SUBJECT of the VERB “rises” (BDB 280, KB 281, *Qal* PERFECT) is unspecified. It could refer to the faithful follower. The UBS *Handbook* (p. 960) suggests “He is like a light in darkness, that shines for the honorable (i.e., upright, MASCULINE PLURAL) men.”

112:4b These same attributes are said of YHWH in Ps. 111:3b,4b (cf. Exod. 34:6-7). This line of poetry has no SUBJECT or VERB but three MASCULINE ADJECTIVES.

1. gracious – BDB 337
2. merciful – BDB 933
3. righteous – BDB 843

It could refer to YHWH (AB, p. 128). NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 204, says that “gracious” is used thirteen times and always refers to YHWH, except in Ps. 112:4. This implies that Ps. 112:4 might not refer to YHWH.

112:5 In the OT, covenant brothers were to lend to the poor without interest (cf. Exod. 22:25; Lev. 25:35-38; Deut. 15:7-8). To help the poor was a way to show one’s devotion to YHWH, who cared for the poor (cf. Ps. 37:26; Pro. 19:17; Matt. 5:42; Luke 6:35). The way one treats others clearly reveals his relationship with God (cf. Ps. 112:4).

112:6b Because of this line and Ps. 112:3b and 9b, an afterlife of some kind, not just the memory of God, is implied! Heaven is not just God’s memory but His people in fellowship with Him (cf. Matt. 22:31-32).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 112:7-9

⁷He will not fear evil tidings;

His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.

⁸His heart is upheld, he will not fear,

Until he looks *with satisfaction* on his adversaries.

**⁹He has given freely to the poor,
His righteousness endures forever;
His horn will be exalted in honor.**

112:9a This is quoted (cf. 2 Cor. 9:9) in Paul's discussion of the Gentile churches' one-time gift to the Mother Church in Jerusalem (i.e., 2 Corinthians 8-9).

112:9c "horn will be exalted in honor" This is an OT idiom for a person's place in society. It denotes a work of God in lifting a person's status, wealth, and power. YHWH does this to the king in 1 Sam. 2:10 (also note Ps. 89:17,24) and to Hannah in 1 Sam. 2:1.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 112:10

**¹⁰The wicked will see it and be vexed,
He will gnash his teeth and melt away;
The desire of the wicked will perish.**

112:10 "gnash his teeth" This was a sign of anger (cf. Ps. 35:16; 37:12; 112:10; Luke 13:28). It also refers to the experience of judgment (cf. Matt. 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).

▣ "melt away" The wicked will perish (cf. Ps. 68:2). They will melt away in the fire of YHWH's judgment (cf. Isa. 34:2-4).

Their psychological pain is caused by

1. the reversal of their prosperous state
2. their exclusion from God's kingdom
3. the blessing and prosperity of the faithful followers before their eyes

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. What does it mean "to fear" the Lord?
2. Explain Ps. 112:4a in your own words.
3. Do Ps. 112:3,6, and 9 speak of heaven?
4. What does it mean "to exalt one's horn"? (Ps. 112:9)

PSALM 113

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD Exalts the Humble <u>No MT Intro</u>	The Majesty and Condescension of God	Hymn Celebrating the LORD as Helper of the Humble	In Praise of the LORD'S Goodness	To the God of Glory and Mercy
113:1-4	113:1a 113:1b-3 113:4-6	113:1 113:2-4	113:1a 113:1b-4	113:1a 113:1b-3 113:4-6
113:5-9	113:7-9b 113:9c	113:5-9	113:5-9b 113:9c	113:7-9b 113:9c

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 113:1-4

¹**Praise the LORD!**

Praise, O servants of the LORD,

Praise the name of the LORD.

²**Blessed be the name of the LORD**

From this time forth and forever.

³**From the rising of the sun to its setting**

The name of the LORD is to be praised.

⁴The LORD is high above all nations;

His glory is above the heavens.

113:1 This verse has the same IMPERATIVE repeated three times for emphasis (BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERATIVE; see same technique in Ps. 96:1-2). It starts out like Psalms 111; 112 (see note at Ps. 111:1). This Psalm reveals why YHWH should be praised.

1. He is above all nations, Ps. 113:4
2. His glory is above the heavens, Ps. 113:4
3. he is unique (see Special Topic: Monotheism), Ps. 113:5
4. He humbles Himself to know and be involved in the lives of His faithful followers, Ps. 113:6 (cf. Ps. 18:35c)
5. He cares for those who are socially ostracized and who have no power, Ps. 113:7-9 (cf. Ps. 109:31)
 - a. the poor
 - b. the needy
 - c. the barren

▣ **“the LORD”** See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

▣ **“O servants of the LORD”** The AB (p. 131) changes the vowels and makes this “the works of the LORD.” This form (BDB 714) is found in Eccl. 9:1.

If the MT is correct, “servants” would refer to

1. angels (cf. Ps. 103:20-22)
2. worshipers in the temple (cf. Deut. 32:43; Ps. 34:22; 69:36; 105:25; 135:14)
3. Levites/priests in the temple (cf. Ps. 134:1; 135:1-2)

▣ **“the name of the LORD”** See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

113:2 “Blessed” This VERB (BDB 138, KB 159, *Pual* PARTICIPLE combined with the JUSSIVE form of the VERB “to be”) is parallel to “praise” (cf. Ps. 145:21).

113:2b-3a These two lines are parallel and in figurative language to express the extent of the praise of YHWH

1. for all time, Ps. 113:2b
2. in all places, Ps. 113:3a

113:4 “high above all nations” This verse tells why He should be praised.

1. He is high above all nations (cf. Ps. 97:9; 99:2)
2. His glory is above the heavens (cf. Ps. 8:1; 57:11; 148:13)

▣ **“glory”** See Special Topic: Glory.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 113:5-9c

⁵Who is like the LORD our God,

Who is enthroned on high,

**⁶Who humbles Himself to behold
*The things that are in heaven and in the earth?***
**⁷He raises the poor from the dust
 And lifts the needy from the ash heap,**
**⁸To make *them* sit with princes,
 With the princes of His people.**
**⁹He makes the barren woman abide in the house
 As a joyful mother of children.
 Praise the LORD!**

113:5 “Who is like the LORD our God” Notice both YHWH and *Elohim* are used for the Deity of Israel (see Special Topic: Names for Deity).

▣ **“Who is enthroned on high”** This is parallel to Ps. 113:4b. It is an idiom of kingship (cf. Ps. 103:19). YHWH is king (note 1 Sam. 8:7). The ancient Israelites viewed their God as sitting on His throne above the atmosphere of the earth with His feet resting (i.e., footstool) on the ark of the covenant. The ark’s lid was where heaven and earth symbolically met!

113:6

NASB, NKJV	“Who humbles Himself”
NRSV	“who looks far down”
TEV, NET	“he bends down to see”
NJB	“he stoops to look down”
JPSOA	“see what is below”
REB	“deigns to look down so low”

This unusual phrase denotes that YHWH knows what is happening on earth, especially to His people (cf. Exod. 3:7-8; Ps. 138:6a,b).

The LXX translates this verse as YHWH looking on the “lowly” (i.e., humans).

The Peshitta translates it as “the deep” and makes it one of three levels of this planet.

1. atmosphere
2. land
3. water

▣ **“in heaven and in the earth”** This is speaking of this planet and its atmosphere. See Special Topic: Heaven.

113:9a,b All of the wives of the early Patriarchs were barren, but YHWH opened their wombs.

1. Sarah – Gen. 21:6
2. Rebekah – Gen. 25:21
3. Rachel – Gen. 30:22-23

However, a child was a special act of YHWH to show

1. His care
2. His power
3. His plan for Israel and the whole world (cf. Ps. 113:4)

See Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan.

113:9c The Psalm ends as it began. Some scholars see this line as the beginning of the next Psalm (LXX). This phrase is the introduction to Psalms 111; 112; 113.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. List the descriptions of God.
2. How does God humble Himself? (Ps. 113:6)
3. Which verse speaks of monotheism?

PSALM 114

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Deliverance of Israel from Egypt <u>No MT Intro</u>	The Power of God in His Deliverance of Israel	Hymn in Praise of God's Great Work in Creating the Nation	A Passion Song	Passover Hymn
114:1-2	114:1-2	114:1-2	114:1-2	114:1a 114:1b-2
114:3-6	114:3-6	114:3-4 114:5-6	114:3-4 114:5-6	114:3-4 114:5-6
114:7-8	114:7-8	114:7-8	114:7-8	114:7-8

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2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 114:1-2

¹When Israel went forth from Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
²Judah became His sanctuary,
Israel, His dominion.

114:1-2 This Psalm is about the exodus from Egypt (cf. Exodus 1-12). The exodus is a direct fulfillment of YHWH's revelation and promise to Abraham in Gen. 15:12-21. The exodus was the beginning of the People of God (cf. Exodus 19-20).

Notice the different designations for the people of God.

1. Israel
2. house of Israel
3. Judah

114:1 “Israel” See Special Topic: Israel (the name).

▣ **“from a people of strange language”** This phrase occurs only here in the OT. The AB (p. 134) takes the same consonants and revocalizes them to fit the imagery of Isa. 25:3, where it denotes a “cruel people” (BDB 470, i.e., the Israelites’ taskmasters, cf. Exod. 3:7). The same root is used with an emphatic *lamedh* (i.e., Hebrew letter L) in Lam. 4:3.

The historical reality of Israel’s having to deal with foreign domination is recurrent (cf. Isa. 28:22; 33:19; Jer. 5:15). The question of interpretation is how God’s people could be dominated by pagans (cf. Habakkuk). As God took the Canaanite tribes out of the land because of their sin, so too, the Israelites because of their sin (i.e., the exiles by Assyria, Babylon, and Persia).

114:2 Because both Judah and Israel are mentioned, one wonders when this Psalm was written.

1. the United Monarchy lasted from Saul – Solomon
2. in 922 B.C. the Kingdom split between
 - a. Rehoboam in Judah
 - b. Jeroboam I in Israel
3. after the return from Persian exile under Cyrus II, the Israelites took their collective name again, although they possessed only a small part of the tribal allocation of Judah (i.e., small area around Jerusalem)

▣ **“His sanctuary”** This refers to

1. the temple in Jerusalem on Mt. Moriah
2. the whole land of Canaan as YHWH’s special possession

▣ **“His dominion”** This term (BDB 606) has two connotations.

1. YHWH’s universal reign/realm, Ps. 103:22; 145:13 (cf. Joshua 3; 11; 13)
2. Canaan as YHWH’s unique possession (i.e., the Promised Land, cf. Exod. 15:17)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 114:3-6

³The sea looked and fled;

The Jordan turned back.

⁴The mountains skipped like rams,

The hills, like lambs.

⁵What ails you, O sea, that you flee?

O Jordan, that you turn back?

⁶O mountains, that you skip like rams?

O hills, like lambs?

114:3-6 This is figurative language (cf. Ps. 18:7-15; 29:3-9; 68:7-8; 77:16-19). The two books that have helped me most in the area of OT hyperbole and imagery are

1. D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*

2. G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*

It is significant that “water” is mentioned in several senses. Water is the only thing not specifically said to be created in Genesis 1. Water in ANE mythology was divine (i.e., salt water, fresh water). There was conflict between water and the gods. The Bible often uses this imagery to describe YHWH (cf. Job 41:1; Ps. 74:12-17; Isa. 27:1). YHWH controls Leviathan in Job 3:8; Ps. 104:26. But also notice the “sea” is personified in Ps. 114:3,5 (along with other aspects of nature).

However, in Ps. 114:8 the life-giving aspect of water is stated. YHWH, not *Ba'al*, is the source of fertility (i.e., rain).

In a sense the imagery of separating water and dry land is an ANE allusion to initial creation. The goal of physical creation was the creation of the people of God. Creation’s purpose was fellowship with God (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan).

114:3 “The sea looked and fled” This could refer to

1. the crossing of the “Red Sea” (lit. “sea of reeds,” see Special Topic: The Red Sea), which is described in Exodus 14 and in Moses’ poem in Exodus 15; God did it by using
 - a. Moses’ staff
 - b. a strong east wind
2. the crossing of the Jordan River at flood stage (cf. Joshua 3); see full exegetical notes on Joshua 3 online; God did it by a landslide upriver, which began at just the right moment and ended at just the right moment

114:4,6 The topological features of Canaan rejoice at the coming of YHWH and His people (cf. Ps. 96:9). This is expressed in the *Qal* IMPERATIVE, “tremble” (BDB 296, KB 297), which denotes both

1. trembling in fear (cf. 1 Chr. 16:30)
2. dancing in joy (cf. Ps. 87:7; 96:9)

114:4 “the mountains” This could refer to Mt. Sinai, but probably to the “mountains” (i.e., hills) of Canaan.

114:6 Notice this verse repeats the VERB of Ps. 114:4.

1. skip, Ps. 114:4 – *Qal* PERFECT
2. skip, Ps. 114:6 – *Qal* IMPERFECT

Psalms 114:5-6 asks the question as to “why” nature acted so strangely. It was because of the presence of the Creator. What happened at the inception of the people of God is meant to continue!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 114:7-8

⁷**Tremble, O earth, before the Lord,
Before the God of Jacob,
⁸Who turned the rock into a pool of water,
The flint into a fountain of water.**

114:7 The earth physically convulses at the approach of the Creator.

Notice He is called “Lord” (*Adon*) here, not “LORD” (YHWH), as in Ps. 114:7a and *Eloah* in 114:7b. See Special Topic: Names For Deity.

114:8 The verse alludes to two specific occasions during the wilderness wandering period where YHWH supernaturally provided life-giving water (cf. Ps. 78:15; 105:41).

1. Exodus 17:6
2. Numbers 20:11

It is used to describe the eschatological period in Isa. 48:21 (i.e., a second exodus).

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. To what historical period in Israel's history does this Psalm refer?
2. What is the theological purpose of personified nature?
3. Why is God's control of water so important?
4. How does the double meaning of "tremble" help with understanding this Psalm?

PSALM 115

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Heathen Idols Contrasted with the LORD <u>No MT Intro</u>	The Futility of Idols and the Trustworthiness of God	Liturgy Contrasting the LORD'S Power with the Impotence of Heathen Gods	The One True God	The One True God
115:1-8	115:1-2	115:1-2	115:1 115:2-8	115:1-2
	115:3-8	115:3-8		115:3-4 115:5-6 115:7-8
115:9-15	115:9-11 115:12-13 115:14-15	115:9-11 115:12-13 115:14-15	115:9-11 115:12-13 115:14-15	115:9-11 115:12-13 115:14-15
115:16-18	115:16-18b 115:18c	115:16-18	115:16-18b 115:18c	115:16 115:17-18b 115:18c

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4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is about the utter futility of trusting in manmade idols. Only the One true Creator/Redeemer Deity is worthy of trust.

- B. This Psalm is characterized by repeated phrases.
1. “not to us,” repeated twice, Ps. 115:1
 2. “they have. . .,” seven IMPERFECTS, Ps. 115:5-7
 3. “trust,” four (three IMPERATIVES and one PARTICIPLE; the ancient versions such as LXX, Peshitta, and Vulgate, interpret this MT IMPERATIVE as a PERFECT), Ps. 115:8-11
 4. “He will bless...,” six (six *Piel* IMPERFECTS and one *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE), Ps. 115:12-15,18
 5. “praise the LORD”
 - a. negated, Ps. 115:17 (*Piel* IMPERFECT)
 - b. commanded, Ps. 115:18 (*Piel* IMPERATIVE)
- C. The LXX and some Hebrew MSS combine Psalm 114 and 115.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 115:1-8

¹Not to us, O LORD, not to us,
 But to Your name give glory
 Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth.

²Why should the nations say,
 “Where, now, is their God?”

³But our God is in the heavens;
 He does whatever He pleases.

⁴Their idols are silver and gold,
 The work of man’s hands.

⁵They have mouths, but they cannot speak;
 They have eyes, but they cannot see;

⁶They have ears, but they cannot hear;
 They have noses, but they cannot smell;

⁷They have hands, but they cannot feel;
 They have feet, but they cannot walk;
 They cannot make a sound with their throat.

⁸Those who make them will become like them,
 Everyone who trusts in them.

115:1-8 This strophe is about the futility of idolatry! There is only one God (cf. Jer. 10:6-10; see Special Topic: Monotheism)! There is only one hope for “the nations.” All Bible students have presuppositions about the “meta-narrative” of the Bible (i.e., its basic purpose or message). YHWH’s desire for the nations to trust Him is mine (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan).

115:1 What a powerful verse. Glory (see Special Topic: Glory) belongs to YHWH alone, not any human agency or group. This is because

1. of YHWH’s lovingkindness (see Special Topic: Lovingkindness [*hesed*])
2. of YHWH’s faithfulness (see Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT; also see Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God)

3. YHWH is sovereign, Ps. 115:3 (cf. Ps. 103:19; 135:5-6)
4. YHWH hears and acts but idols cannot, Ps. 115:4-7 (cf. Ps. 135:15-18; Deut. 4:28; Isa. 44:12-17; Jer. 10:3-5)
5. YHWH is the creator, “maker of heaven and earth” (cf. Ps. 115:15b,16)

▣ **“Your name”** See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

115:2 The question of line 2 is the theological issue. Israel was to be a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:5-6) to help the world know and understand YHWH. But because of her faithlessness the world saw only the judgment of God (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

The very question of line 2 is repeated in Ps. 42:3; 79:10 (cf. Joel 2:17; Micah 7:10).

115:4 “silver and gold” These are the precious metals that overlaid the images made from stone or wood.

115:7b Because Ps. 115:5 mentions “speech,” this may refer to some type of divination (see Special Topic: Diviner) done in the name of the pagan idol. See notes at Deut. 18:10-11 online.

115:8 This verse acknowledges the truth that humans become like the god they worship. Oh, that believers would be more like Jesus! The goal of biblical faith is not only heaven someday only but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 4:13; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3,7; 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:15). Does your life reflect who you worship?

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 115:9-15

- ⁹**O Israel, trust in the LORD;
He is their help and their shield.**
- ¹⁰**O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD;
He is their help and their shield.**
- ¹¹**You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD;
He is their help and their shield.**
- ¹²**The LORD has been mindful of us; He will bless us;
He will bless the house of Israel;
He will bless the house of Aaron.**
- ¹³**He will bless those who fear the LORD,
The small together with the great.**
- ¹⁴**May the LORD give you increase,
You and your children.**
- ¹⁵**May you be blessed of the LORD,
Maker of heaven and earth.**

115:9-15 Notice the threefold designation and command (“trust,” BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERATIVE).

1. O Israel, trust YHWH, Ps. 115:9,12
2. O house of Aaron, trust YHWH, Ps. 115:10,12
3. You who fear/revere YHWH, trust Him, Ps. 115:11,12 (this could be a further characterization of #1 and 2, cf. Ps. 135:19-20, or a reference to non-Israelites, cf. 1 Kgs. 8:41-43; Ezra 6:21; Neh. 10:28)

In turn YHWH will be

1. their help (cf. Ps. 18:2; 33:20; 70:5; 121:2; 124:8; 146:5)
2. their shield (cf. Ps. 28:7; 59:11; 84:9,11; 119:114; 144:2)
3. mindful of us (cf. Ps. 98:3)
4. bless both great and small
5. give you and your children increase (BDB 414, KB 418, lit. “add,” *Hiphil* JUSSIVE, cf. Ps. 112:2)

There are consequences in time and eternity for idolatry! There are consequences for personal faith and faithfulness in YHWH (cf. Ps. 115:16-18)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 115:16-18

**¹⁶The heavens are the heavens of the LORD,
But the earth He has given to the sons of men.
¹⁷The dead do not praise the LORD,
Nor *do* any who go down into silence;
¹⁸But as for us, we will bless the LORD
From this time forth and forever.
Praise the LORD!**

115:16a “The heavens are the heavens of the LORD” This refers to YHWH’s throne (i.e., the highest heaven). See Special Topic: The Heavens and the Third Heaven.

115:16b YHWH has given the earth for mankind’s abode and control (cf. Ps. 8:6). However, it belongs to Him (cf. Deut. 10:14) because He made it (cf. Ps. 121:2; 124:8; 134:3).

115:17 “The dead” See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead?

115:18 God’s people will forever bless (*Piel* IMPERFECT) and praise (*Piel* IMPERATIVE) YHWH. This implies an afterlife separate from the idolatrous who “do not praise” and “go down into silence” (cf. Ps. 6:5; 30:9; 88:10-11; 94:17).

▣ **“Praise the LORD”** As with Ps. 113:9c, the LXX moves this to the beginning of the next Psalm.

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1. Explain the OT terms
 - a. lovingkindness
 - b. faithfulness/truth
2. Why are both Ps. 115:1 and 2 so theologically significant?
3. How is YHWH different from pagan idols?
4. Does Ps. 115:9-11 refer to one group, two groups, or three groups?
5. List the things YHWH is and does for faithful followers.
6. Explain Ps. 115:16 in your own words.
7. Explain “go down into silence” of Ps. 115:17b.

PSALM 116

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Thanksgiving for Deliverance From Death <u>No MT Intro</u>	Thanksgiving for Deliverance From Death	Thanksgiving for Healing	Someone Saved From Death Praises God	Thanksgiving
116:1-4	116:1-2 116:3-4	116:1-4	116:1-4	116:1-2 116:3-4a 116:4b
116:5-11	116:5-7 116:8-11	116:5-7 116:8-11	116:5-7 116:8-11	116:5-6 116:7-9 116:10-13
116:12-19	116:12-14 116:15 116:16-17 116:18-19b 116:19c	116:12-19	116:12-14 116:15-19b 116:19c	116:14 116:15 116:16-17 116:18-19

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2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 116:1-4

- ¹I love the LORD, because He hears
My voice *and* my supplications.
²Because He has inclined His ear to me,
Therefore I shall call *upon Him* as long as I live.
³The cords of death encompassed me
And the terrors of Sheol came upon me;
I found distress and sorrow.
⁴Then I called upon the name of the LORD:
“O LORD, I beseech You, save my life!”

116:1-4 This Psalm was written by a faithful follower facing death (cf. Ps. 116:3). He explains his thought processes on how to deal with this situation.

1. affirmation – I love the LORD, BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* PERFECT (cf. Deut. 6:5; 30:6; Ps. 31:23)
2. why he loves YHWH
 - a. He hears my prayers, BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - b. He has inclined His ear to me (parallel to a.), BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* PERFECT
3. result – I will call upon Him, BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERFECT
4. the psalmist’s condition
 - a. cords of death (cf. Ps. 18:4-5) encompassed him, BDB 67, KB 79, *Qal* PERFECT
 - b. terrors (BDB 865 twice, of distress, cf. Ps. 118:5; Lam. 1:3) of *Sheol* came upon (lit. “found,” BDB 592, KB 619, *Qal* PERFECT) him (see Special Topic: Where Are the Dead?)
5. conclusion – I called upon the name of the LORD, BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERFECT
His words were, “O LORD, I beseech You, save my life,” BDB 572, KB 589, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 116:5-11

- ⁵Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God is compassionate.
⁶The LORD preserves the simple;
I was brought low, and He saved me.
⁷Return to your rest, O my soul,
For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.
⁸For You have rescued my soul from death,
My eyes from tears,
My feet from stumbling.
⁹I shall walk before the LORD
In the land of the living.
¹⁰I believed when I said,
“I am greatly afflicted.”
¹¹I said in my alarm,
“All men are liars.”

116:5-11 After the psalmist prays he contemplates the characteristics of YHWH (see Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel's God).

1. gracious
2. righteous
3. compassionate
4. preserves the simple (BDB 834, KB 989, an untrained or naive person, but open to instruction, cf. Ps. 19:7)

YHWH shows His character.

1. He saved me – BDB 446, KB 440, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, Ps. 116:6b
2. return to rest – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (he talks to himself of a mental place of safety and security in YHWH), Ps. 116:7b
3. He has dealt bountifully with him (cf. Ps. 13:6; 119:17; 142:7), Ps. 116:7b
4. He rescued my soul (i.e., *nephesh*, BDB 659) from death – BDB 322, KB 321, *Piel* PERFECT, Ps. 116:8a
5. He rescued my eyes from tears, Ps. 116:8b
6. He rescued my feet from stumbling, Ps. 116:8c (cf. Ps. 56:13)

The psalmist's response.

1. see #2 above
2. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living (i.e., YHWH will heal/save him)
3. Ps. 116:10-11 is difficult to interpret in context. It may reflect
 - a. current faith
 - b. past statements (Paul quotes Ps. 116:11b in Rom. 3:4)

These two verses must refer to those who seek/plot against the psalmist's life. If so, the context of this Psalm is not sickness but treachery (cf. Ps. 116:11b).

The LXX translation of Ps. 116:10 can be seen in 2 Cor. 4:13, but the MT is uncertain.

116:11 “in my alarm” This *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 342, KB 339) denotes a state of mental fear, panic (cf. Ps. 31:22). The “rest” of Ps. 116:7 is the direct opposite of this word!

▣ **“All men are liars”** As “rest” is the opposite of “alarm,” lying humans are the opposite of YHWH (cf. Num. 23:19a; 1 Sam. 15:29; Rom. 3:4).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 116:12-19

¹²What shall I render to the LORD

For all His benefits toward me?

¹³I shall lift up the cup of salvation

And call upon the name of the LORD.

¹⁴I shall pay my vows to the LORD,

Oh *may it be* in the presence of all His people.

¹⁵Precious in the sight of the LORD

Is the death of His godly ones.

¹⁶O LORD, surely I am Your servant,

I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid,

You have loosed my bonds.

¹⁷To You I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving,

And call upon the name of the LORD.

**¹⁸I shall pay my vows to the LORD,
 Oh *may it be* in the presence of all His people,
¹⁹In the courts of the LORD's house,
 In the midst of you, O Jerusalem.
 Praise the LORD!**

116:12-19 This strophe has all IMPERFECTS (except Ps. 116:16c), which denotes ongoing, continuous idolatry. The psalmist describes what he will do in worship at the temple and in life (cf. Ps. 116:9) because of YHWH's great care and deliverance (cf. Ps. 116:12).

1. he will lift up the cup of salvation, Ps. 116:13a – AB (p. 149) says it was a ritual part of the thanksgiving sacrifice in the temple; it denotes a libation, not a drink (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 618)
2. he will call upon the name of the Lord, Ps. 116:13b,17b (see Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH)
3. he will pay his vows, Ps. 116:14,18 (cf. Leviticus 27)
4. he will offer sacrifice, Ps. 116:17
5. he will praise YHWH in the temple, Ps. 116:19 (cf. 116:14) – this IMPERATIVE may go at the beginning of Psalm 117 (LXX)

116:15 The ADJECTIVE “precious” (BDB 429) is usually used of valuable items. In this context it denotes the fact that YHWH cares deeply when His faithful followers go through trials and sickness on earth (cf. Ps. 72:14). He is aware of their situations and quickly comes to their aid (cf. Exod. 3:7).

In a fallen world, not every believer is physically delivered. Crises, problems, and fears do come. Even if we do not see God's presence, He is with us and for us. One day we will be with Him!

The NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 525, has suggested an emendation that an “n” has dropped out of the word “death” and the root should be seen as the Aramaic word for “trust,” thereby rendering the line as

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the faith/trust of His loyal ones.”

The problem is the use of “precious” with “death.” Surely the death of saints is not precious (i.e., valuable). Some scholars have changed the meaning of the Hebrew “precious” (BDB 429) to “costly” or “painful.” It grieves YHWH for His faithful followers to suffer and die! The terrible results of the Fall were never His purpose in creation!

▣ **“saints”** See note online at Ps. 16:10 and 30:4.

116:16 Notice “I am Your servant” is repeated for emphasis. The term “servant” (BDB 713) has a wide semantic field but here it probably denotes “worshiper.”

The next line, “the son of Your handmaid,” is also found in Ps. 86:16 and denotes

1. a righteous mother
2. an Israelite mother
3. an idiom of humility
4. a slave family or faithful servant family

The psalmist bases this conclusion on the fact that YHWH has loosed (BDB 834, KB 986, *Piel* PERFECT) his bonds (BDB 64), which could denote

1. saved him from terminal sickness (straits or *Sheol*)
2. saved him from enemies
3. saved him from prison or exile

4. saved him from distress (the term [BDB 865] “straits” in Ps. 116:3 [twice] is used in Ps. 118:5 and Lam. 1:3 of “distress”)

A simple way to express this verse would be “Here Am I” or “I am available for service.” YHWH has saved him, now he will willingly and fully serve Him (cf. Rom. 12:1-2).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Explain the possible life settings of this Psalm.
2. Is it unusual for death and *Sheol* to be personified?
3. List the characteristics of YHWH.
4. Why is Ps. 116:10-11 so hard to interpret?
5. What OT imagery lies behind Ps. 116:16?
6. List the words, phrases that reflect temple worship.

PSALM 117

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Psalm of Praise <u>No MT Intro</u>	Let All Peoples Praise the LORD	Doxology	In Praise of the LORD	Summons to Praise
117:1-2	117:1-2b 117:2c	117:1-2	117:1-2b 117:2c	117:1-2b

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is the shortest Psalm.
- B. It encourages the Gentiles to praise Israel's God (cf. Psalm 67; 100), the only true God.
- C. Israel's God is fully revealed in
 1. His acts in creation (Genesis 1-2; 6-9)
 2. His promises to Abraham (Genesis 12; 15; 18; 22)
 - a. land
 - b. seed
 - c. great name
 - d. all families of the earth blessed in him
 3. redemptive acts toward Abraham's descendants (cf. Ps. 117:2a)
 - a. the exodus
 - b. conquest
 - c. return from exile

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 117:1-2

¹Praise the LORD, all nations;

Laud Him, all peoples!

²For His lovingkindness is great toward us,

And the truth of the LORD is everlasting.

Praise the LORD!

117:1 This Psalm begins and concludes with the *Piel* IMPERATIVE, “Praise” (BDB 237, KB 248, cf. Psalm 113; LXX, Psalm 116).

▣ **“Laud Him”** This is a second *Piel* IMPERATIVE (BDB 986, KB 1387, cf. Ps. 147:12).

▣ **“all nations. . .all peoples”** This universal aspect is characteristic of the Psalms (cf. Ps. 22:27; 33:8; 47:1; 66:1,4; 67:3-5,7; 82:8; 96:7-10; 98:4; 100:1).

This is the OT’s great commission. Israel was to be a “kingdom of priests” (cf. Exod. 19:5-6) because all the world is YHWH’s. See Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan.

This verse is quoted by Paul in Rom. 15:11, which emphasizes YHWH’s inclusion of the Gentiles in the work of Christ (cf. Rom. 15:9-13; note Rev. 7:9).

117:2 “lovingkindness. . .truth” These two characteristics of YHWH (see Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God) are often listed together (i.e., Ps. 108:4; 115:1; 138:2).

For “lovingkindness” see Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*).

For “truth” or “faithfulness” see Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT.

▣ **“everlasting”** See Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*).

This is an important point because of Israel’s repeated faithlessness and idolatry. YHWH is forever faithful but His people are not! He has a larger purpose than just one people/nation (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How common in the OT is YHWH’s love, care, concern, and redemption of Gentiles?
2. Define *hesed* (i.e., lovingkindness).
3. Define *emet* (i.e., truth).
4. How does YHWH’s love toward Israel affect the Gentiles?

PSALM 118

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Thanksgiving for the LORD'S Saving Goodness <u>No MT Intro</u>	Praise to God for His Everlasting Mercy	Thanksgiving for Deliverance in Battle	A Prayer of Thanks for Victory	Processional Hymn for the Feast of Shelters
118:1-4	118:1	118:1	118:1-4	118:1
	118:2-4	118:2-4		118:2-4
118:5-9	118:5-9	118:5-9	118:5-9	118:5-7
				118:8-9
118:10-14	118:10-14	118:10-14	118:10-12	118:10-12
			118:13-14	118:13-14
118:15-18	118:15-18	118:15-18	118:15-16	118:15-16
			118:17-18	118:17-18
118:19-21	118:19-20	118:19	118:19	118:19-21
		118:20	118:20	
	118:21	118:21-25	118:21	
118:22-29	118:22-24		118:22-25	118:22-24
	118:25-28			118:25-27b
		118:26-27	118:26-27	
				118:27c-28
		118:28	118:28	
	118:29	118:29	118:29	118:29

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is an antiphonal processional Psalm (cf. Ps. 118:1 and 2-4). There are several different groups who seem to respond to each other. This explains
 - 1. the repetitive nature
 - 2. the different subjects involved in this Psalm
- B. The exact historical setting of this Psalm has been disputed. It is obvious that Moses' song of victory at the Red Sea (i.e., Exodus 15) is the historical source of the metaphors. However, the exact date could fit the period of the post-exilic return under Nehemiah or an eschatological setting which would make the Psalm applicable to the pressures and problems of each generation.
- C. In history this Psalm became identified with the Passover festival. It is the last of the Hallel Psalms, Psalm 113 through 118. Jesus quotes it during the Triumphant Entry (cf. Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10,11; Luke 20:17). This Psalm is used quite often in the NT to interpret the work of Christ (cf. Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:32,33; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:7).
- D. The Jewish Midrash interprets the Psalm in a Messianic sense. This can be particularly seen in the NT uses and interpretations of Ps. 118:22 and 26 (cf. Matt. 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38; John 12:13).
- E. This Psalm characteristically describes the experiences of the nation in terms of a unique individual, originally the king of Israel, but later came to be the ideal figure known as the Messiah (see Special Topic: Messiah). In this sense, as the ideal Israelite, He fulfills not only this passage, but also Isaiah 53.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 118:1-4

- ¹Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
- ²Oh let Israel say,
“His lovingkindness is everlasting.”
- ³Oh let the house of Aaron say,
“His lovingkindness is everlasting.”
- ⁴Oh let those who fear the LORD say,
“His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

118:1 “Give thanks” This Psalm begins and ends with praise (“give thanks,” BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE). A good title for this Psalm would be “A Festival of Thanks.”

As far as personal application of this Psalm to everyday life, it is extremely meaningful to enumerate the blessings of God to His people, both historically and existentially.

▣ **“the LORD”** This is the covenant name for God, YHWH, from the Hebrew VERB, “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14, see Special Topic: Names for Deity).

▣ **“He is good”** Often when one reads the OT one is uncertain of the character of God (i.e., holy war, exodus, exiles). This Psalm reassures us of the basic character of the creator God (cf. 1 Chr. 16:34; Ps. 25:8; 34:8; 73:1; 86:5; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1,29; 119:68; 135:3; 136:1; 145:9; Jer. 33:11). See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God.

▣ **“For His lovingkindness is everlasting”** This is to show the mercy and faithfulness of God, not only in His character but also His creative and redemptive acts (cf. Nehemiah 9; Psalm 136). This term (see Special Topic: Lovingkindness [*hesed*]) really means “God’s covenant loyalty.”

118:2 “Oh let Israel say” “Say” (BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* JUSSIVE) is repeated three times. Psalm 118:2-4 shows three distinct groups within Israel who are called upon to praise the Lord. These three groups can also be seen in Ps. 115:9-13. The sequence seems to be:

1. the nation
2. the priests
3. those who fear the Lord (the Jewish Study Bible, p. 1414, suggests “proselytes,” but Psalm 15 implies godly Israelites)

They are to praise the Lord for His covenant fidelity.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 118:5-9

⁵From my distress I called upon the LORD;
The LORD answered me *and set me* in a large place.
⁶The LORD is for me; I will not fear;
What can man do to me?
⁷The LORD is for me among those who help me;
Therefore I will look *with satisfaction* on those who hate me.
⁸It is better to take refuge in the LORD
Than to trust in man.
⁹It is better to take refuge in the LORD
Than to trust in princes.

118:5 “From my distress I called upon the LORD” It is obvious that the existential setting of the author is some type of confinement, persecution, or problem. It seems that this worship leader, whether it be the king or the nation personified in the Messiah, is going to experience problems.

The term “distress” (BDB 865) is a rare form found only here in the SINGULAR. It is found in the PLURAL in Lam. 1:3 and in a CONSTRUCT in Ps. 116:3 (where NASB translates it as “terrors of Sheol”).

▣ **“The LORD answered me and set me in a large place”** This is a wonderful affirmation that God does always hear and respond to our call for help (cf. Ps. 118:21; 17:6; 31:2; 34:15; 40:1; 69:17; 71:21; 86:1; 102:2). The Hebrew word for “distress” (BDB 865) means “to confine or cause someone to be under pressure,” while the metaphor “set in a large place” (BDB 932) speaks of taking someone out of confinement and releasing them in a large pasture (cf. Ps. 4:1; 18:19; 31:8). Some think it refers to heaven (AB, p. 156), but in context it simply means deliverance from a physical problem or need.

118:6 “The LORD is for me, I will not fear;

What can man do to me” What a tremendous affirmation of faith that God is on our side (cf. Ps. 16:8; 23:4; Isa. 43:1-2). And if God is on our side, victory is assured (cf. Ps. 56:4,11). The presence of God is the greatest blessing!

▣ **“What can man do to me”** This is the faith conclusion of a faithful follower who, by Scripture and experience, knows the Lord’s presence, care, provision, and protection (cf. Ps. 56:4,11; 146:3; Hebrews 13:6).

118:7 “The LORD is for me among those who help me” This Hebrew idiom means “the Lord is our military champion” (cf. Ps. 54:4). The concept of God as warrior (cf. Isa. 59:17; Eph. 6:10-12) is significant to those who are unjustly suffering persecution for His name.

▣ **“Therefore I will look *with satisfaction* on those who hate me”** “Those who hate me,” who caused the psalmist “distress” in Ps. 118:5, surrounded him in Ps. 118:10-13.

God’s judgment is both eschatological and temporal. The Psalms speak often of vindication and justice in this life (cf. Ps. 23:5; 37:34; 52:5-6; 54:7; 58:10; 59:10; 91:8; 92:11; 112:8).

118:8-9 “It is better to take refuge in the LORD

Than to trust man” This is an affirmation on the fleetingness of temporal help but the joy and power of the eternal, redeeming God (cf. 2 Chr. 32:7-8; Ps. 108:12; 146:3; Isa. 2:22; 30:1-3; 31:1-3; Jer. 17:5-8).

The AB (p. 157) asserts that “man” (adam, BDB 9) in Ps. 118:8 is parallel to “prince” (BDB 622) and that they are an idiom for “all men” (i.e., Ps. 146:3).

Notice the use of four *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS.

1. seek refuge – BDB 340, KB 337 (twice)
2. trust – BDB 105, KB 120 (twice)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 118:10-14

¹⁰**All nations surrounded me;**

In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.

¹¹**They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me;**

In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.

¹²**They surrounded me like bees;**

They were extinguished as a fire of thorns;

In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.

¹³**You pushed me violently so that I was falling,**

But the LORD helped me.

¹⁴**The LORD is my strength and song,**

And He has become my salvation.

118:10-12 “All nations surround me” This phrase has been interpreted in several different ways.

1. Because of the many allusions throughout this Psalm and many other Scriptures, some commentators have seen this as referring to the exodus period.
2. Many commentators have assumed that the individual aspects better fit a post-exilic period with its reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem (cf. Neh. 4:7,8).

3. Others have assumed that this refers to an eschatological context where the kingdoms of this world come against the kingdom of our God and His Christ (cf. Ps. 2:2; Zech. 14:2; Rev. 19:11-21).

▣ **“In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off”** “Cut them off” (BDB 557, KB 555, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is literally the Hebrew phrase used for circumcision. Because of the Messianic implications of this Psalm, some see this as a conversion of the Gentile nations. See Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan. However, in context, it seems to be their destruction, not their salvation.

The repeated use of “I” and “me” in Ps. 118:10-13 implies the author is the king. “Surround him” would denote laying siege to Jerusalem.

118:12 These two metaphors seem to imply the tumultuous surrounding of the people of God by anti-God, worldly forces and their complete and immediate destruction. See Special Topic: Fire.

118:13 “pushed me violently” This phrase is intensified in Hebrew by the use of the *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT and the *Qal* PERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 190, KB 218).

The AB (p. 158) sees this action as an idiom for death, based on the concept of “stumbling” (cf. Ps. 35:6; 36:12; 56:13; 116:8; also note NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 933).

118:14 “The LORD is my strength and song,

And He has become my salvation” Psalm 118:14 and 15 reflect the song of victory which was sung after the crossing of the Red Sea (cf. Exod. 15:2a); the same quote is found in Isa 12:2.

For “strength” see Exod. 15:2; Ps. 28:8; 46:1; 59:17; 81:1; Isa. 12:2b. This is often used in a military sense, as is “salvation/deliverance.”

For “salvation” see Special Topic: Salvation (OT term).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 118:15-18

¹⁵**The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous;**

The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.

¹⁶**The right hand of the LORD is exalted;**

The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.

¹⁷**I will not die, but live,**

And tell of the works of the LORD.

¹⁸**The LORD has disciplined me severely,**

But He has not given me over to death.

118:15 “The sound of joyful shouting” See Exodus 15:6,12.

▣ **“tents of the righteous”** This is a historical allusion (or dead metaphor) to the wilderness wandering period, which was always idealized in Israel’s traditions as the courtship between God and His people.

118:15-16 “The right hand of the LORD” This thrice repeated phrase emphasizes in anthropomorphic terms (see Special Topic: God Described as Human) the power, presence, and willingness of God to act on behalf of His people in time as well as eternity. See Special Topic: Hand.

The term “left hand” denoted weakness and is never used of God’s activity.

118:17 “I will not die, but live” This may be an emphasis on national survival but used in the sense of an individual.

▣ **“And tell of the works of the LORD”** This refers to verbal praise in the temple (cf. Ps. 9:14). This was a way of expressing both

1. theology about YHWH (cf. Exod. 9:16; Ps. 96:1-6)
2. personal trust in YHWH (cf. Exod. 10:2)

The VERB (BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* IMPERFECT) denotes recounting the saving acts of YHWH (cf. Ps. 40:5; 73:28; 78:3,4; 79:13; 107:22). This retelling of YHWH’s acts

1. educates the next generation of faithful followers (cf. Deut. 4:9,10; 6:7,20-25; 11:19; 31:13; 32:46)
2. evangelizes the nations (cf. Deut. 4:6)

118:18 “The LORD has disciplined me severely” This implies that the people of God, symbolized here as an individual, will go through extremely hard times because of their sin and unfaithfulness. It is also an emphasis on the fact that God is in control of history. These things are not simply meaningless happenings, but have historical purpose in moving toward ultimate conclusion and the victory of God. See Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan.

The individual and corporate aspects can be seen in

1. use of two SINGULAR IMPERFECTS used in a COHORTATIVE sense in Ps. 118:19,28
2. use of two PLURAL COHORTATIVES used in Ps. 118:24, note *Hiphil* PLURAL IMPERATIVE at 118:29

Also note that “disciplined me severely” is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a PERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 415, KB 418), which denotes intensity (cf. same form but different root in Ps. 118:13).

God does discipline His children (cf. Deut. 4:36; 8:5; 2 Sam. 7:14; Job 5:17; 33:19; Ps. 73:14; 94:12; 119:67,71,75; Pro. 3:11-12; Jer. 31:18; 1 Cor. 11:32; Heb. 12:5-11; Rev. 3:19).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 118:19-21

¹⁹**Open to me the gates of righteousness;**

I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to the LORD.

²⁰**This is the gate of the LORD;**

The righteous will enter through it.

²¹**I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me,**

And You have become my salvation.

118:19 “Open to me the gates of righteousness” “Open” (BDB 834, KB 986) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. Psalm 118:19-27 seems to suggest a processional (possibly military) from outside the city of Jerusalem to the inside of the temple area. Psalm 118:19 does not refer to the temple, which is mentioned specifically in 118:26,27, but the city gates of Jerusalem.

118:20 “The righteous will enter through it” This is a reference to the processional entering the holy precincts of the city or the temple. Notice the righteousness factor is not only national or corporate, but also individual (cf. Ps. 15:1-2; 24:3-6; 26:6; 140:13; Isa. 33:13-16). See Special Topic: Righteousness.

118:21 “And You have become my salvation” One must remember that the term “salvation” (cf. Ps. 118:14) in the OT speaks of physical deliverance. See Special Topic: Salvation (OT term).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 118:22-29

- ²²**The stone which the builders rejected**
Has become the chief corner *stone*.
- ²³**This is the LORD's doing;**
It is marvelous in our eyes.
- ²⁴**This is the day which the LORD has made;**
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
- ²⁵**O LORD, do save, we beseech You;**
O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity!
- ²⁶**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD;**
We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.
- ²⁷**The LORD is God, and He has given us light;**
Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.
- ²⁸**You are my God, and I give thanks to You;**
You are my God, I extol You.
- ²⁹**Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;**
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

118:22 “The stone which the builders rejected” This is obviously used in the sense of paradox. It seems here to refer to national rejection. But we understand from the life of Christ that it was individually fulfilled in Him. See Special Topic: Cornerstone.

▣ **“Has become the chief corner *stone*”** This seems to be a reference to the Messiah (see Special Topic: Messiah), used in Isa. 28:16. It also speaks of the rejection of the Messiah and the seeming defeat of God's purpose (i.e., Calvary).

118:23 “This is the LORD's doing;

It is marvelous in our eyes” God's ways are so different from our ways (cf. Isa. 55:9-11). No one expected the Messiah to be God Incarnate. No one expected His substitutionary atonement (cf. Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21). But this was the pre-determined plan of God (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28). See Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan.

118:24 “This is the day which the LORD has made;

Let us rejoice and be glad in it” God is in control of history (both corporate and individual)! That which seems to be a spiritual disaster is often turned into a tremendous spiritual victory!

I recommend the book by Hannah Whithall Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*.

▣ For “day” see Special Topic: Day (*yom*).

118:25 “O LORD, do save” This is the term “Hosanna,” which was spoken about Jesus at the triumphant entry into Jerusalem during the last week of His earthly life (cf. Matt. 21:42,45). Whatever the original historical setting of this Psalm, it had come to be used in first century rabbinical Judaism as a welcoming ceremony for the pilgrims entering the city for Passover. However, when Jesus appeared, they took that which was an annual greeting and made it very personal to Him.

This verse begins with two IMPERATIVES.

1. save – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil*
2. send prosperity – BDB 852 II, KB 1026, *Hiphil*

In OT theology (i.e., “the two ways,” cf. Deut. 30:15,19; Psalm 1), God’s forgiveness and acceptance were demonstrated visibly by prosperity. However, this proved not always to be the case (cf. Job, Psalm 73).

118:26 “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD” The use of this phrase in the NT puts a Messianic aspect to this Hallel Psalm (cf. Matt. 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38; John 12:13). See Special Topic: Messiah.

118:27

NASB, NRSV,

TEV, JPSOA “The LORD is God”

NKJV “God is the LORD”

There is no VERB, just *El* (BDB 42) and YHWH (BDB 217). This same form occurs in Ps. 85:9. The same combination without a VERB is also in Ps. 118:28, *El* (lit. “My *El*”) and PRONOUN (BDB 61).

The Deity of Israel goes by several names.

1. some have developed through history
2. some were titles of pagan deities applied to Israel’s God
3. some denote different aspects of His being
4. some are poetic parallels for literary purposes

▣ **“He has given us light”** There have been several interpretations.

1. God’s personal presence – Ps. 89:15; 90:8
2. God’s revelation
 - a. Scripture – Ps. 19:8; 36:9; 119:105; Isa. 51:4
 - b. Messiah – Isa. 49:6; Mic. 7:8; John 1:9; 3:19-21; 12:35-36; 1 John 2:8
3. God’s blessing – Num. 6:25
4. the *Shekinah* cloud of the exodus – Exod. 13:21-22; 14:20
5. God’s portable throne chariot – Ezek. 1:4,27

▣ **“Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar”** This is a very difficult Hebrew phrase and has been understood in several different ways.

1. “link together the pilgrims” – This involves an emendation of the text based on the Dead Sea Scrolls.
2. “with branches in your hand draw up in procession” – This is the translation of the Jerusalem Bible (JB) and the NIV; it seems to reference the OT allusion of branches used in the Festival of Tabernacles (cf. Lev. 23:40). The term “cords” can be used for branches (cf. Ezek. 19:11; 31:3,10,14).
3. “bring the sacrifice down to the horns of the altar” – This seems to fit the context best, and the term “bound” can be found in this connotation in Jdgs. 15:13; 16:11; Ezek. 3:25.
4. The concept of sacrifice seems to be caught up with the substitutionary atonement of Christ (i.e., Isa. 52:13-53:12), which is alluded to in the Masoretic Text of Mal. 2:3. The horns of the altar would have been the holiest part of the altar on which the sacrificial blood was smeared (cf. Exod. 27:2; 30:10; Lev. 4:7,18, 25,30,34; 8:15; 9:9; 16:18).

118:28-29 This Psalm ends as it began, with a festival of thanks (i.e., BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVES) to God for who He is, what He has done, and what He is going to do on behalf of His faithful followers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. List all of the blessings that God has given us in this Psalm.
2. Why do many scholars think this Psalm is antiphonal?
3. How is the nation personified in the king and later in the Messiah?
4. Explain the Messianic elements of Ps. 118:22 and 26, how they fit into ancient Israel and how they fit into the life of Christ.
5. What is a preferred translation of Ps. 118:27? What are its implications to the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth?

PSALM 119

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Meditations and Prayers Relating to the Law of God <u>No MT Intro</u>	Meditations on the Excellencies of the Word of God	Meditations on the Law of God	The Law of the LORD	In Praise of the Divine Law
119:1-8 (<i>Aleph</i>)	119:1-8	119:1-8	119:1-8	119:1-8
			Obedience to the Law of the LORD	
119:9-16 (<i>Beth</i>)	119:9-16	119:9-16	119:9-16	119:9-16
			Happiness in the Law of the LORD	
119:17-24 (<i>Gimel</i>)	119:17-24	119:17-24	119:17-24	119:17-24
			Determination to Obey the Law of the LORD	
119:25-32 (<i>Daleth</i>)	119:25-32	119:25-32	119:25-32	119:25-32
			A Prayer for Understanding	
119:33-40 (<i>He</i>)	119:33-40	119:33-40	119:33-40	119:33-40
			Trusting the Law of the LORD	
119:41-48 (<i>Vav</i>)	119:41-48	119:41-48	119:41-48	119:41-48
			Confidence in the Law of the LORD	
119:49-56 (<i>Zayin</i>)	119:49-56	119:49-56	119:49-56	119:49-56
			Devotion to the Law of the LORD	
119:57-64 (<i>Heth</i>)	119:57-64	119:57-64	119:57-64	119:57-64
			The Value of the Law of the LORD	
119:65-72 (<i>Teth</i>)	119:65-72	119:65-72	119:65-72	119:65-72
			The Justice of the Law of the LORD	
119:73-80 (<i>Yodh</i>)	119:73-80	119:73-80	119:73-80	119:73-80
			A Prayer for Deliverance	

119:81-88 (<i>Kaph</i>)	119:81-88	119:81-88	119:81-88	119:81-88
119:89-96 (<i>Lamedh</i>)	119:89-96	119:89-96	Faith in the Law of the LORD	119:89-96
119:97-104 (<i>Mem</i>)	119:97-104	119:97-104	Love for the Law of the LORD	119:97-104
119:105-112 (<i>Num</i>)	119:105-112	119:105-112	Light from the Law of the LORD	119:105-112
119:113-120 (<i>Samekh</i>)	119:113-120	119:113-120	Safety in the Law of the LORD	119:113-120
119:121-128 (<i>Ayin</i>)	119:121-128	119:121-128	Obedience to the Law of the LORD	119:121-128
119:129-136 (<i>Pe</i>)	119:129-136	119:129-136	Desire to Obey the Law of the LORD	119:129-136
119:137-144 (<i>Tsadhe</i>)	119:137-144	119:137-144	The Justice of the Law of the LORD	119:137-144
119:145-152 (<i>Qoph</i>)	119:145-152	119:145-152	A Prayer for Deliverance	119:145-152
119:153-160 (<i>Resh</i>)	119:153-160	119:153-160	A Plea for Help	119:153-160
119:161-168 (<i>Shin</i>)	119:161-168	119:161-168	Dedication to the Law of the LORD	119:161-168
119:169-176 (<i>Tav</i>)	119:169-176	119:169-176	A Prayer for Help	119:169-176

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

I. Opening Statement

As one who loves the Bible and has spent his life studying it, this Psalm is a special treasure (as is Psalm 19). The Bible, God's written word, has allowed me to come to know God's Living Word, Jesus (cf. John 1:1-14; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:13-16; Heb. 1:2-3). The Spirit's illumination has allowed me to do as Ezra did (Ezra 7:10). Psalm 119 has truly been

- A. a blessing, Ps. 119:1
- B. a lifestyle faith, Ps. 119:1-2
- C. a lamp to my feet and a light to my path, Ps. 119:105

I commend it to you with great joy, peace, and hope that it will effectively produce

- A. a desire to study the Bible
- B. a desire to live the Bible
- C. a deeper personal relationship with the Triune God

One more explanation about how I approached this lengthy Psalm. It is so long and repetitive that I decided to deal with each stanza (i.e., each consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet). I have tried to deal with the uniqueness of each unit and not do an overall summary.

II. Historical Setting

- A. The Arabic translation lists David as the author.
- B. Dahood, in the *Anchor Bible Commentary*, asserts that a united monarchal (Saul – Solomon) date is very possible. He comes to this by
 1. comparing this Psalm with its translation found among the Dead Sea Scrolls and
 2. this Psalm contains many pre-exilic elements.
- C. Leupold sees the setting as post-exilic (Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Malachi). He bases this on:
 1. the problems related to resettlement and persecution mentioned so often in the Psalms

2. the absence of any mention of the sacrificial system caused him to believe that the absence of the temple and its ritual, along with an increase in the place of Bible study, fits an early post-exilic setting best.
- D. The occasion for this Psalm is joy (cf. Ps. 119:14,16,24,35,47,70,77,92,111,143,162,174) and trust in God and His revealed truth amidst persecution. This knowledge brings peace and stability.

III. Literary Elements

- A. This, like Psalms 9-10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; and 145, is an acrostic based on the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This same form is found in Pro. 31:10-31 and the first four chapters of Lamentations. This is the longest and most highly developed acrostic in the Bible. Each Hebrew letter starts eight verses.
- B. There is a recurrent theme in every verse of this Psalm related to God's teachings to mankind. The author uses several synonyms for the Law (see Special Topic: Terms for God's Revelation, cf. Ps. 19:7-9):
 1. the Law – used 25 times
 2. the testimonies – used 23 times
 3. the precepts – used 21 times
 4. the statutes – used 20 times
 5. the commandments – used 22 times
 6. the judgments – used 23 times
 7. the Word – used 24 times
 8. the words – used 19 times
 9. the way – used 13 times
 10. the truth or faithfulness – used 5 times
 11. the righteousness – used 14 times
- C. Kimchi's (i.e., a Jewish commentator, A.D. 1160-1235) definitions of the synonyms used for God's revelation to man:
 1. the Law – "it is the setting down of duties and how they are to be done"
 2. the testimonies – "precepts that are for a testimony or federal communication"
 3. the precepts – used "precepts which reason teaches that are, as it were, deposited in our nature"
 4. the statutes – "precepts whose reason is not known"
 5. the judgments – "the judgments that pass between a man and his neighbor"
 6. the way – "the way is the rule upon which the Scripture is grounded"
- D. God's revelation and God's person are merged in this Psalm. To know God's revelation is to know Him. To cling to God's revelation is to cling to Him (i.e., compare Ps. 119:31a with Deut. 10:20).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:1-8 (*Aleph*)

¹How blessed are those whose way is blameless,
Who walk in the law of the LORD.
²How blessed are those who observe His testimonies,
Who seek Him with all *their* heart.
³They also do no unrighteousness;
They walk in His ways.
⁴You have ordained Your precepts,
That we should keep *them* diligently.
⁵Oh that my ways may be established
To keep Your statutes!
⁶Then I shall not be ashamed
When I look upon all Your commandments.
⁷I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments.
⁸I shall keep Your statutes;
Do not forsake me utterly!

119:1 This strophe describes the “blessed” (BDB 80, cf. Ps. 1:1, see Special Topic: Blessing [OT]).

1. those whose way (i.e., lifestyle) is blameless (see Special Topic: Blameless, Innocent, Guiltless, Without Reproach), Ps. 119:1a
2. those who walk in the law of the Lord – another way to speak of an obedient lifestyle, Ps. 119:1b, 3b
3. those who observe His testimony, Ps. 119:2a
4. those who seek Him with all their heart; Ps. 119:2b (see Special Topic: Heart), cf. Ps. 9:10; 14:12 (and they seek His law, Ps. 119:45,94,155)
5. they do no unrighteousness, Ps. 119:3a
6. they keep God’s covenant, Ps. 119:4b,5b,8b
7. they keep His statutes, Ps. 119:8a

Notice the emphasis on knowing God’s revelation and then keeping it! See Special Topic: Keep.

▣ There are several terms which describe God’s revelation (see Special Topic: Terms for God’s Revelation).

1. law (BDB 435), Ps. 119:1b
2. testimonies (BDB 730), Ps. 119:2:a
3. ways (BDB 202), Ps. 119:3b, 5a
4. precepts (BDB 824), Ps. 119:4a
5. statutes (BDB 349), Ps. 119:5b, 8a
6. commandments (BDB 846), Ps. 119:6b
7. judgments (BDB 1048), Ps. 119:7b

Also, every verse in this long acrostic Psalm makes mention of one of these (or several others, such as “word” in Ps. 119:9,11,16, or “ordinances,” Ps. 119:13,30,39,43,52,62,75,84,102,106,120,137,147,149,156, 160,164,175).

119:2 “observe” This is a key aspect of godly living. It is used of several things.

1. keep the statutes – Ps. 119:2,22,129
2. keep the decrees – Ps. 119:33,34,145

3. keep the precepts – Ps. 119:56,69,100
4. keep the commands – Ps. 119:115
5. keep the law – Ps. 119:34

▣ **“with all *their* heart”** Total dedication is crucial (cf. Deut. 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 30:2). This becomes an idiom for total yieldedness to YHWH and His will. David had a heart like this, as did Solomon until his old age! Devotion at one point in one’s life is not enough! David sinned but he repented. Maintaining the relationship is the key, not sinlessness (cf. 1 John 1:9).

119:6 “I shall not be ashamed” In the ANE “shame” had both

1. inward aspect – feelings of shame at being publicly humiliated, sense of rejection by family and friends, loss of reputation
2. outward aspect – being poor, powerless
3. religious aspect – rejected by YHWH, cf. Ps. 25:20; 31:1; 71:1; 119:6,31,46,80

Often the Psalms ask God “to shame” the enemies (cf. Ps. 35:4; 70:2; 71:13; 86:17; 119:78; also note Matt. 10:33; Mark 8:38; Luke 12:9).

119:8 “Do not forsake me utterly” This VERB (BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) is a repeated cry to YHWH (cf. Ps. 38:21; 71:9,18). Do not be distant, or leave me to my own resources!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:9-16 (*Beth*)

- ⁹How can a young man keep his way pure?
By keeping *it* according to Your word.
- ¹⁰With all my heart I have sought You;
Do not let me wander from Your commandments.
- ¹¹Your word I have treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You.
- ¹²Blessed are You, O LORD;
Teach me Your statutes.
- ¹³With my lips I have told of
All the ordinances of Your mouth.
- ¹⁴I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,
As much as in all riches.
- ¹⁵I will meditate on Your precepts
And regard Your ways.
- ¹⁶I shall delight in Your statutes;
I shall not forget Your word.

119:9 “a young man” The author of Psalm 119 often expresses the need for “young” followers to maintain their godly living.

The pure way is defined as keeping God’s revelation (i.e., word). This demands a constant “guarding” (BDB 1036, KB 1581).

119:10 “With all my heart” See note at Ps. 119:2b.

▣ **“I have sought You”** This VERB (BDB 205, KB 233) is used often in this Psalm (cf. Ps. 119:2,10,45, 94,155). It denotes a diligent life of prayer, study, and worship.

▣ **“wander”** This VERB (BDB 993, KB 1413, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) is found in a negative statement in Ps. 119:21,118. It is used only three times in Psalms, but six times in Proverbs. It was used of “unintentional sins” in Lev. 4:13; Num. 15:22. Be careful of “that” which causes faithful followers to take their eyes off the clearly marked paths of YHWH.

119:11 “Your word I have treasured in my heart” This phrasing is used of Mary’s response to the angel’s message (cf. Luke 2:19,51). God’s word is extremely valuable (cf. Psalm 19:10; 119:14b). Is your Bible valuable to you? Do you read it, study it, do it, and teach it to others (cf. Ezra 7:10)?

This VERB (BDB 860, KB 1049, *Qal* PERFECT) is literally “hide” and is an idiom for memorizing God’s word (cf. Job 23:12; Pro. 2:1; 7:1).

119:12 “teach me” This is a *Piel* IMPERATIVE (BDB 540, KB 531). It is used often in Psalm 119 (cf. 119:7,12,26,64,66,68,71,73,99,108,124,135,171). Truth does not come by human effort but by

1. the Spirit of God
2. God’s revelation
3. personal commitment to God
4. diligent study
5. personal application

119:13 This line of poetry implies a worship setting in the temple.

119:14 To the faithful follower God’s revelations are the most valuable things on earth (cf. Ps. 19:10; 119:72,127; Pro. 8:10,11,19).

119:15 This verse has two COHORTATIVES.

1. meditate – BDB 967, KB 1319, *Qal*, cf. Ps. 119:23,27,48 (twice), 78,148. Meditation on God’s word starts the Book of Psalms (cf. Ps. 1:2). This meditation is illustrated in Deut. 6:6-9.
2. regard – BDB 613, KB 661, *Hiphil*, cf. Ps. 119:6,15,18

These two imply diligent study! This takes time, effort, commitment, and scheduling! See Seminar of Bible Interpretation online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

119:16 “I will delight” BDB 1044, KB 1613, *Hithpalpel* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 119:24,35,47,70,77,92,143, 174.

▣ **“I will not forget”** BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* IMPERFECT, negated, cf. Pa. 119:61,83,93,109,141,153,176 (the final line of Psalm 119).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:17-24 (*Gimel*)

- ¹⁷Deal bountifully with Your servant,
That I may live and keep Your word.
¹⁸Open my eyes, that I may behold
Wonderful things from Your law.
¹⁹I am a stranger in the earth;

Do not hide Your commandments from me.

²⁰**My soul is crushed with longing**

After Your ordinances at all times.

²¹**You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed,**

Who wander from Your commandments.

²²**Take away reproach and contempt from me,**

For I observe Your testimonies.

²³**Even though princes sit and talk against me,**

Your servant meditates on Your statutes.

²⁴**Your testimonies also are my delight;**

They are my counselors.

119:17 Notice that the psalmist asks for God's blessing (i.e., "deal bountifully," BDB 168, KB 197, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) to help him be a better "servant" (BDB 713).

1. that I may live – BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. that I may keep Your word – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* COHORTATIVE

The blessings are not for personal use or comfort but to strengthen, deepen, and enlarge God's work on earth.

▣ **"Your word"** See note at Ps. 119:1 and Special Topic: Terms for God's Revelation.

119:18 The same worldview that God must empower His servants is expressed in this verse. One cannot see (lit. "uncover," BDB 162, KB 161, *Piel* IMPERATIVE) or understand God's will and ways without His help. See Special Topic: Illumination.

▣ **"Wonderful things"** See Special Topic: Wonderful Things.

▣ **"Your law"** See note at Ps. 119:1.

119:19 "I am a stranger in the earth" This is the worldview of a faithful follower. The Fall of Genesis 3 transformed this planet into a place of sojourn and pilgrimage (cf. 1 Chr. 29:15; Ps. 119:54; Hebrews 11:13-16). We long for a deep fellowship with our Creator, a fellowship we were created for (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 3:8). This world is no longer our home!

The metaphor of a "stranger/sojourner" (BDB 158) comes from YHWH's word to Abraham about his descendants being strangers in Egypt (cf. Gen. 15:13). Abraham calls himself by this term in Gen. 23:4. It becomes the name of one of Moses' sons in Exod. 2:22. The Israelites are told to give justice and mercy to "strangers/aliens" because they were once the same (cf. Exod. 23:9). Abraham is said to have been looking for a city of God (cf. Heb. 11:10). This points beyond this life. YHWH wants to share eternity with His faithful followers!

▣ **"Do not hide Your commandments from me"** Sin has caused a spiritual blindness (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). The Bible recognizes two kinds of spiritual blindness.

1. God-imposed (see Special Topic: God Hardened)
2. self-imposed (i.e., John 9:13-41)

119:20 The true faithful follower seeks God and His word with a single-minded diligence!

The VERB “crushed” (BDB 176, KB 203, *Qal* PERFECT) occurs only here and Lam. 3:16. The word “longing” (BDB 1060) occurs only here.

▣ **“soul”** The “soul” longs for YHWH (cf. Ps. 42:2; 63:2; 119:81; 143:6). For a discussion of *nephesh* (BDB 659) see note at Gen. 35:18 online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

119:21 Faithless ones are characterized as

1. arrogant (i.e., those who knew but chose to rebel) – BDB 267, cf. Ps. 86:14; 119:51,69,78,85,122
2. the cursed – BDB 76, KB 91
3. who wander from God’s commandment – BDB 993, KB 1413

119:22 “Take away reproach and contempt” The VERB (lit. “roll away,” BDB 164, KB 193, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is a prayer for forgiveness.

1. reproach – BDB 357, cf. Ps. 69:19,20
2. contempt – BDB 100 II, cf. Ps. 123:3-4

The reason why God should forgive is because the psalmist observes His commands (i.e., the two ways, cf. Deut. 30:15,19).

There is some discussion among scholars as to which Hebrew root the VERB of Ps. 119:22a comes from.

1. uncover – (lit. “make bald,” גלה, BDB 164 [MT])
2. roll away – גלל, BDB 164 II from Jos. 5:9; Ps. 22:9

119:23-24 “Even though princes sit and talk against me” The use of “princes” (BDB 978, cf. Ps. 118:9) implies

1. the psalmist is a wealthy, powerful leader, possibly the king
2. there is tension within the national leadership

However, with tumult raging the psalmist focuses on the truth and promises of God’s revelation. True peace and stability can be found only in Him, not circumstances or fleeting fame, power, wealth, or position.

The Peshitta translates “princes” (BDB 978, cf. Ps. 119:161) as “ungodly” or “evil men,” which removes any hint of the psalmist’s position as a leader.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:25-32 (*Daleth*)

²⁵**My soul cleaves to the dust;**

Revive me according to Your word.

²⁶**I have told of my ways, and You have answered me;**

Teach me Your statutes.

²⁷**Make me understand the way of Your precepts,**

So I will meditate on Your wonders.

²⁸**My soul weeps because of grief;**

Strengthen me according to Your word.

²⁹**Remove the false way from me,**

And graciously grant me Your law.

³⁰**I have chosen the faithful way;**

I have placed Your ordinances *before me*.

³¹**I cling to Your testimonies;**

O LORD, do not put me to shame!

**³²I shall run the way of Your commandments,
For You will enlarge my heart.**

119:25 The first line gives the existential setting of the psalmist (cf. Ps. 44:25). He feels he is close to death, whether by sickness or rebellion is unstated, but Ps. 119:23 implies court intrigue (although because of the acrostic structure of the Psalm, it is uncertain if literary context or rhyming is the guiding factor).

The psalmist has a series of prayer requests.

1. revive me according to Your work, Ps. 119:25b – BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 119:37,40,88,93,107,149,154,156,159. It can mean
 - a. preserve
 - b. revive
2. teach me Your statutes, Ps. 119:26b – BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. 119:12,26,64,68,108,124,135,171
3. make me understand the way of Your precepts, Ps. 119:27a – BDB 106, KB 122, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. 119:34,73,125,144,169
4. strengthen me according to Your word, Ps. 119:28b – BDB 827, KB 1086, *Piel* IMPERATIVE. BDB suggests the VERB in *Piel* means
 - a. fulfill, in Ps. 119:106
 - b. confirm, here
5. remove the false way from me, Ps. 119:29a – BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE. “The false way” is a direct contrast to “the everlasting way” of Ps. 139:24.
6. graciously grant me Your law, Ps. 119:29b – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, God’s revelation is the “faithful way” (cf. Ps. 119:30).

119:30-32 Notice the number of things the psalmist will do, or has done, because of God’s providing understanding through His revelation.

1. he prayed (*Piel* PERFECT), Ps. 119:26a
2. he chose (*Qal* PERFECT) the faithful way, Ps. 119:30a
3. he placed (*Piel* PERFECT) God’s revelation before himself (lit. “accounted God’s ordinances worthy”), Ps. 119:30b
4. he cleaved (*Qal* PERFECT, cf. 119:25) to God’s revelation, Ps. 119:31a (in Duet. 10:20 it is used of clinging to God; in this Psalm God’s person and revelation are merged)
5. he will run (*Qal* IMPERFECT) the way of God’s revelation, Ps. 119:32a

119:32b “For You will enlarge my heart” God will increase (lit. “enlarge,” BDB 931, KB 1210, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) the psalmist’s capacity to understand and act on that knowledge of God.

For “heart” see Special Topic: Heart.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:33-40 (He)

**³³Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
And I shall observe it to the end.**

**³⁴Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law
And keep it with all *my* heart.**

**³⁵Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,
For I delight in it.**

³⁶Incline my heart to Your testimonies

And not to *dishonest* gain.

³⁷Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity,

And revive me in Your ways.

³⁸Establish Your word to Your servant,

As that which produces reverence for You.

³⁹Turn away my reproach which I dread,

For Your ordinances are good.

⁴⁰Behold, I long for Your precepts;

Revive me through Your righteousness.

119:33-40 This strophe is characterized by requests (9 IMPERATIVES) for God to instruct and enable the psalmist to live out those instructions. This is similar to the VERB *shema* (BDB 1033, KB 1570), which means “to hear so as to do.” God’s revelation is more than rules or a creed, it is godly living!

The term “way,” used so often in Psalms, denotes this lifestyle, daily, volitional obedience. See Special Topic: Keep. Notice how:

1. teach me – I shall observe it, Ps. 119:33
2. give me understanding – I may observe it, Ps. 119:34

119:35 For the faithful follower obedience is not tedious or legalistic, but joyful.

119:36-39 The psalmist mentions two things he fears would take his heart away from God.

1. dishonest gain, Ps. 119:36b
2. eyes looking at vanity, Ps. 119:37a

He senses that he cannot accomplish spiritual things without God’s help.

1. teach me, Ps. 119:33 – BDB 434, KB 436, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 25:4; 27:11; 86:11
2. give me understanding, Ps. 119:34 – BDB 106, KB 122, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. make me walk in the path, Ps. 119:35 – BDB 201, KB 231, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
4. incline my heart, Ps. 119:36 – BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
5. turn away my eyes, Ps. 119:37a – BDB 716, KB 778, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
6. revive me, Ps. 119:37b – BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
7. establish Your word, Ps. 119:38 – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

But also notice that divine actions (*Hiphil* IMPERATIVES) must be accompanied by godly choices and decisions (series of COHORTATIVES and PERFECTS used of human actions).

1. I shall observe it, Ps. 119:33b – BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. I may observe it, Ps. 119:34a – same as #1 but *Qal* COHORTATIVE
3. keep it, Ps. 119:34b – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
4. I delight in it, Ps. 119:35b – BDB 342, KB 339, *Qal* PERFECT
5. I long for Your precepts, Ps. 119:40a – BDB 1060, KB 1672, *Qal* PERFECT

Do you see the balance? See Special Topic: Election/Predestination and the Need For a Theological Balance and Special Topic: Predestination (Calvinism) vs. Human Free Will (Arminianism).

119:34 “with all my heart” See note at Ps. 119:2.

119:37 “vanity” This could refer to idolatry (cf. Ps. 24:4; 101:3). Psalm 119:48 mentions “lift palms” (i.e., “lift up my hands”), which in Ps. 44:20-21 is used of idolatry.

▣ **“revive”** This is a repeated theme (cf. Ps. 119:25,37,40,88,93,107,149,154,156,159). The VERB (lit. “live,” BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, has a wide semantic field) is “live.” The only “true” life is life in fellowship with YHWH, the giver of life. True life has two components.

1. physical life
2. spiritual life

119:38 “that which produces reverence for You” See Special Topic: Fear (OT).

119:39 “Your ordinances are good” Notice again attributes ascribed to God’s revelation are also ascribed to God Himself (cf. 1 Chr. 16:34; Ps. 25:8; 34:8; 73:1; 86:5; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1,29; 119:68; 135:3; 136:1; 145:9; Jer. 33:11). Here it is the ADJECTIVE “good” (BDB 373 II).

This Psalm is not just about God’s revelation, but God Himself!

119:40 “righteousness” See Special Topic: Righteousness.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:41-48 (*Vav*)

- ⁴¹May Your lovingkindnesses also come to me, O LORD,
Your salvation according to Your word;
⁴²So I will have an answer for him who reproaches me,
For I trust in Your word.
⁴³And do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
For I wait for Your ordinances.
⁴⁴So I will keep Your law continually,
Forever and ever.
⁴⁵And I will walk at liberty,
For I seek Your precepts.
⁴⁶I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings
And shall not be ashamed.
⁴⁷I shall delight in Your commandments,
Which I love.
⁴⁸And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments,
Which I love;
And I will meditate on Your statutes.

119:41-48 This strophe is characterized by COHORTATIVES and SINGULAR VERBS.

1. I will have an answer, Ps. 119:42a – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. I trust, Ps. 119:42b – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PERFECT, SINGULAR
3. I wait, Ps. 119:43b – BDB 403, KB 407, *Piel* PERFECT, SINGULAR
4. I will keep, Ps. 119:44a – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* COHORTATIVE, SINGULAR
5. I will walk, Ps. 119:45a – BDB 229, KB 246, *Hithpael* COHORTATIVE, SINGULAR
6. I seek, Ps. 119:45b – BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PERFECT, SINGULAR
7. I will also speak, Ps. 119:46a – BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* COHORTATIVE, SINGULAR
8. I will delight, Ps. 119:47a – BDB 1044, KB 1613, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

9. I love, Ps. 119:47b – BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* PERFECT, SINGULAR
10. I will lift up, Ps. 119:48a – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT, SINGULAR, used in a COHORTATIVE sense
11. I love, Ps. 119:48b – same as #9
12. I will meditate, Ps. 119:48c – BDB 967, KB 1319, *Qal* COHORTATIVE, SINGULAR

Knowing God and His revelation demands a personal response!

119:41 Notice that “lovingkindness” (see Special Topic: Lovingkindness [*hesed*]) and “salvation” (see Special Topic: Salvation [OT]) are personified as things that come to faithful followers. Because of this they act in godly ways.

119:43a This VERB (BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE) means “to snatch away.” It is used in the sense of deliver from

1. death – Deut. 32:39; Ps. 22:20; 33:19; 56:14; 86:13; Pro. 24:11
2. sin – Ps. 39:9; 79:9

Here it seems to be related to Ps. 119:42, which denotes an answer from God’s revelation to those who reproach the psalmist (a good NT application is Matt. 10:19-22; Mark 13:9-12, esp. Mark 13:11; Luke 21:12-19).

119:44 This line of poetry emphasizes the current and future relevance of God’s revelation (cf. Matt. 5:17-19).

119:46 This denotes the faithful followers’

1. witness to defeated kings
2. an aspect of covenant making with foreign nations
3. a metaphor for powerful or educated people

119:48a “Lifting the hands” was the normal position for prayer in Israelite culture (cf. Ps. 28:2; 63:4; 134:2; 141:2; 143:6; Lam. 2:19; 1 Tim. 2:8). Again, usually one “lifts the hands” to God Himself but here to His revelation.

▣ **“I will meditate”** See note at Ps. 119:15.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:49-56 (*Zayin*)

⁴⁹Remember the word to Your servant,

In which You have made me hope.

⁵⁰This is my comfort in my affliction,

That Your word has revived me.

⁵¹The arrogant utterly deride me,

Yet I do not turn aside from Your law.

⁵²I have remembered Your ordinances from of old, O LORD,

And comfort myself.

⁵³Burning indignation has seized me because of the wicked,

Who forsake Your law.

⁵⁴Your statutes are my songs

In the house of my pilgrimage.

⁵⁵**O LORD, I remember Your name in the night,
And keep Your law.**
⁵⁶**This has become mine,
That I observe Your precepts.**

119:49 “Remember” This VERB (BDB 269, KB 269) occurs three times in this strophe.

1. Ps. 119:49 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. Ps. 119:52 – *Qal* PERFECT
3. Ps. 119:55 – *Qal* PERFECT

The psalmist asks for YHWH to remember him (119:49) because he remembers and obeys Him (cf. Ps. 119:55b,56b).

Notice all the VERBS (except the first IMPERATIVE) are PERFECTS or IMPERFECTS with *waw* (see Special Topic: Hebrew Grammar). The psalmist’s knowledge and actions are settled worldview, lifestyle realities! God’s word is not just information but

1. hope, Ps. 119:49b
2. comfort, Ps. 119:50a, 52b
3. preservation, Ps. 119:50b
4. guide for life, Ps. 119:51b
5. song, Ps. 119:54a
6. thought in the night, Ps. 119:55a
7. Ps. 119:56a
 - a. happiness – TEV
 - b. blessing – NRSV
 - c. comfort – Peshitta

▣ **“Your servant”** Here it refers to a faithful follower who seeks, knows, and hopes in God’s word. See note at Deut. 34:5 online at www.freebiblecommentary.org. See Special Topic: My Servant.

▣ **“hope”** This is literally “wait” (BDB 430, KB 407, *Piel* PERFECT). The idea of waiting for God’s promises to come to pass is an act of both faith and hope. Not maybe, could be, hope, but-sure-of-the-event-yet-uncertain-of-the-time hope (similar to NT usage related to the Second Coming). It is a recurrent theme of the Psalter (cf. Ps. 31:24; 33:18,22; 71:4; 119:49,74,81,114,147; in a corporate sense in Ps. 130:7; 131:3). This thought is expressed well in Romans 15:4.

119:50 “comfort” This NOUN (BDB 637) occurs only here and Job 6:10, but the VERB (BDB 636, KB 688) is common.

This comfort amidst affliction is the trustworthiness of God’s word! He is with faithful followers, even in times of distress, failure, attack, depression, and doubt (cf. Deut. 31:6; Jos. 1:5; 1 Sam. 12:22; 1 Kgs. 6:13; 8:57; 2 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 13:5). How do I know when the circumstances scream different? His word! Psalm 119:52 reminds us to look at God’s past acts!

119:51 The psalmist has experienced the attacks of those who know God’s law but reject it (cf. Ps. 119:51b, 53). True faith has observable characteristics. Obedience is the visible evidence of true faith (see Special Topic: Keep).

▣ **“turn aside”** This VERB (BDB 639, KB 692, *Qal* PERFECT) has a wide semantic field and usually denotes “stretching out,” “spreading out,” or “bending,” but here it has the specialized metaphorical sense of deviation

from the path, the path being “the way of God” (i.e., Ps. 139:24). God’s word is a clearly marked road, path, way. The path leads to life, peace, joy, and fellowship with God (cf. Ps. 119:105; Pro. 6:23). The first title of the NT church in Acts was “The Way.” Any deviation from the clear guidelines of God’s word brings problems!

The OT idiom of “turning to the right or left” can be seen in Deut. 5:32; 17:11,20; 28:14; Pro. 4:27). Stay on the path!

119:53 Often in the OT it seems that godly people are calling down wrath on their enemies, but in reality they are calling on God to be faithful to His previous word (i.e., Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30). A good example of this is Ps. 119:158. The wrath is deserved because of intentional, purposeful disobedience. Sin and rebellion have consequences both in time and eternity. Stay on the God-given path!

119:54 This verse seems (cf. Ps. 119:19) to be talking about life. God’s word, for those who know it and keep it, brings a daily, lifelong song (cf. Ps. 42:8)! Are you singing?

119:55 “Your name” See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

▣ **“in the night”** “The night” can have several connotations.

1. a time of reflection
 - a. Ps. 16:7
 - b. Ps. 63:6
 - c. Ps. 77:6
2. a time of distress – Ps. 77:2
3. a time of prayer/praise
 - a. Ps. 42:8
 - b. Ps. 92:1-2
 - c. Ps. 119:62
 - d. Ps. 149:5
 - e. Isa. 26:9
 - f. Matt. 14:23; Luke 6:12
 - g. Acts 16:25

▣ **“And keep Your law”** Night time reflection, prayer, and praise should result in daytime daily godly living! Obedience is the evidence of faith (cf. Luke 6:46).

119:56 The first line is ambiguous because there is no obvious antecedent.

However, notice it reemphasizes obedience in the second line! Remember the large number of terms for God’s revelation (i.e., word, law, ordinances, precepts, etc.). See Special Topic: Terms for God’s Revelation.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:57-64 (*Heth*)

⁵⁷**The LORD is my portion;**

I have promised to keep Your words.

⁵⁸**I sought Your favor with all *my* heart;**

Be gracious to me according to Your word.

⁵⁹**I considered my ways**

And turned my feet to Your testimonies.

⁶⁰**I hastened and did not delay
To keep Your commandments.**

⁶¹**The cords of the wicked have encircled me,
But I have not forgotten Your law.**

⁶²**At midnight I shall rise to give thanks to You
Because of Your righteous ordinances.**

⁶³**I am a companion of all those who fear You,
And of those who keep Your precepts.**

⁶⁴**The earth is full of Your lovingkindness, O LORD;
Teach me Your statutes.**

119:57 “The LORD is my portion” This term “portion” (BDB 324) has several usages.

1. no land allotment for Levi
 - a. Num. 18:20
 - b. Deut. 18:2
 - c. Jos. 13:33
 - d. Ezek. 44:28
2. division of the Promised Land to the tribes
 - a. Jos. 17:5,14; 19:9
 - b. Ezek. 47:13
3. Israel as a special people among humanity
 - a. Jer. 10:16
 - b. Jer. 51:19
4. something given by God to both the righteous and the wicked
 - a. Job 20:29; 27:13; 31:2
 - b. Eccl. 21:20,21; 3:22; 5:17-18; 9:9
5. used metaphorically of a special faith relationship with YHWH
 - a. Ps. 16:5; 73:26; 119:57; 142:5
 - b. Lam. 3:24

▣ **“I have promised to keep Your words”** This VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581) characterizes this strophe as “remember” (Ps. 119:49-56).

1. Ps. 119:57 – *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
2. Ps. 119:60 – *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
3. Ps. 119:63 – *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE
4. also note Ps. 119:55

Obedience is crucial! Obedience reveals the heart! See Special Topic: Keep.

119:58 “with all my heart” This is an idiom from Deuteronomy (cf. Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 30:2) which denotes a complete devotion. Later in Israel’s history this phrase was used to

1. show David’s complete devotion to God
2. show Solomon’s partial devotion to God

For “heart” see Special Topic: Heart.

▣ Notice the prayer request (i.e., *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 41:4; 56:1; 57:1) is based on YHWH’s faithfulness to His word/promise (cf. Psalm 119:41, 58, 76, 116, 170). The trustworthiness of YHWH and

His revelation is a crucial pillar of biblical faith (see four sermons on the trustworthiness of the Bible online at www.freebiblecommentary.org, home page, first paragraph, link).

119:59-60 As YHWH is called on to be faithful to His promises, now the psalmist affirms his faithfulness (cf. Ps. 119:57b, 61b). Immediate obedience to God's law reveals a complete devotion!!

Notice the emphasis of the two VERBALS.

1. make haste – BDB 301, KB 300, *Qal* PERFECT
2. tarry (negated) – BDB 554, KB 552, *Hithpalpel* IMPERFECT

God is called on to answer quickly (cf. Ps. 69:17; 79:8; 102:2; 143:7), so too, must the faithful follower quickly respond to the Spirit's prompting.

119:59 “turned” This VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT with *waw*) has a wide semantic field but is the key term used for “repentance.” Therefore, some commentators (UBS *Handbook*, p. 1014) see this verse referring to one who has violated God's law but has turned again to keeping it and revering God.

119:61 It has not been easy for the psalmist to live a faithful life because there are always enemies.

The VERB (BDB 728, KB 795, *Piel* PERFECT) is found only here and is translated (see NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 339):

1. NASB – “encircled”
2. NKJV – “bound”
3. LXX, NRSV, NJB – “ensnare”
4. TEV – “lay a trap”
5. JPSOA – “coiled around”
6. Peshitta – “beset”

The AB (p. 181) relates it to Ps. 116:3 and, as usual, sees the line as referring to personified death/grave.

▣ **“I have not forgotten Your law”** This is a recurrent theme in this Psalm (cf. Ps. 119:61,83,109,141, 153,176). The wicked forget God's law (cf. Ps. 50:22; 119:139).

119:62 This nighttime meditation links to Ps. 119:55.

119:63 Notice how the faithful followers are characterized.

1. those who fear/revere You
2. those who keep Your revelation

There can be no claim of fellowship with God while living a life of known disobedience.

119:64 Notice the universal aspect of this verse. For “earth” see Special Topic: Land, Country, Earth.

The term translated “lovingkindness” by NASB is *hesed*. See Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*) and the note at Ps. 33:5!

▣ **“Teach me Your statutes”** This is only the second IMPERATIVE in this strophe (cf. Ps. 119:58b). Although the psalmist meditates on God's word/promise he still needs to understand it more! Regular, Spirit-led Bible study is crucial for a mature, growing believer (see Ps. 119:12,26,64,108,124,135,171)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:65-72 (*Teth*)

⁶⁵**You have dealt well with Your servant,
O LORD, according to Your word.**

⁶⁶Teach me good discernment and knowledge,
 For I believe in Your commandments.
⁶⁷Before I was afflicted I went astray,
 But now I keep Your word.
⁶⁸You are good and do good;
 Teach me Your statutes.
⁶⁹The arrogant have forged a lie against me;
 With all *my* heart I will observe Your precepts.
⁷⁰Their heart is covered with fat,
 But I delight in Your law.
⁷¹It is good for me that I was afflicted,
 That I may learn Your statutes.
⁷²The law of Your mouth is better to me
 Than thousands of gold and silver *pieces*.

119:65 This verse sums up the faithful follower's worldview. Knowledge (Ps. 119:66) and obedience (Ps. 119:67,69) of God's revelation bring a happy, healthy, peaceful life. True life is found only in Him. Remember in this Psalm knowledge of God's word is equated with knowing God Himself!

Almost every verse of this Psalm has a Hebrew word that denotes God's revelation (see Special Topic: Terms For God's Revelation).

The Hebrew word טוב (BDB 373) begins verses, Ps. 119:65, 66, 68,71, and 72. It is the key word for this stanza.

119:66 Although the psalmist knows God's revelation, he is conscious that he needs to understand it more and more (cf. Ps. 119:68, both VERBS "teach," BDB 540, KB 531, are *Piel* IMPERATIVES, i.e., prayer request, cf. Ps. 119:12,26,64,66,68,108,124,135,171).

▣ **"I believe"** There are several PERFECT VERBS that describe the psalmist's attitude.

1. I believe – BDB 52, KB 63, *Hiphil* PERFECT (see Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT)
2. I keep – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* PERFECT (see Special Topic: Keep)
3. I delight – BDB 1044, KB 1613, *Pilpel* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 1:2; 112:1; 119:16,24,35,47,70,77,92, 143,174

Notice how mental ascent must be matched by an obedient life (cf. James 1:22-25).

119:67 The psalmist is confessing his disobedience in the past that resulted in God's discipline. God's discipline is the act of a loving parent (cf. Heb. 12:5-13). The cursings of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30 are God's reaction to covenant disobedience and His desire for His followers to change their ways! He desires to bless us! Discipline always has a redemptive purpose!

119:68 This first line of poetry describes God's character. He is "good" (BDB 373 II, cf. Ps. 25:8; 86:5; 100:5; 106:1; Jer. 33:11; Nah. 1:7). See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel's God.

▣ **"Teach me Your statutes"** This is the second use of the *Piel* IMPERATIVE of this VERB (cf. Ps. 119:66). God wants to reveal Himself and His will through Scripture.

119:69-70 As is so often the case in Psalms, the psalmist feels attacked. The arrogant have lied about him. It is contextually difficult to identify who these attackers are. They are often the rich and powerful of society, as here (i.e., “fat,” BDB 316, Ps. 119:70a, cf. Ps. 17:10; 73:7; this is spiritually parallel to Isa. 6:10, BDB 1031 I). But true wealth for the psalmist is a knowledge of God and His revelation (Ps. 119:72, cf. 19:10).

119:69 The VERB (BDB 381, KB 378, *Qal* PERFECT) in line 1 means to plaster or smear (cf. Job 13:4). This stanza has two IMPERFECTS which describe the psalmist’s ongoing action.

1. I will observe, Ps. 119:69 – BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. I may learn, Ps. 119:71 – BDB 540, KB 531, *Qal* IMPERFECT

119:70 “heart” See Special Topic: Heart.

119:70b There is no “but” in the Hebrew text. However, a sharp contrast is implied. “The two ways” of Deut. 30:15-20 and Ps. 1:1 are implied.

119:71 The psalmist acknowledges that God’s discipline was a benefit because it caused him to turn back to Him and His word. The unfairness of life, the terrible consequences to personal choices are often a chance to trust God more. A book that has helped me in this area is Hannah Whithall Smith’s *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life*.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:73-80 (*Yodh*)

- ⁷³**Your hands made me and fashioned me;
Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.**
- ⁷⁴**May those who fear You see me and be glad,
Because I wait for Your word.**
- ⁷⁵**I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous,
And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.**
- ⁷⁶**O may Your lovingkindness comfort me,
According to Your word to Your servant.**
- ⁷⁷**May Your compassion come to me that I may live,
For Your law is my delight.**
- ⁷⁸**May the arrogant be ashamed, for they subvert me with a lie;
But I shall meditate on Your precepts.**
- ⁷⁹**May those who fear You turn to me,
Even those who know Your testimonies.**
- ⁸⁰**May my heart be blameless in Your statutes,
So that I will not be ashamed.**

119:73 This verse asserts God’s creation of the psalmist. This is expressed in several ways.

1. an allusion to Gen. 2:7 (“formed” [body] – BDB 427; “formed days” – Ps. 135:16)
2. Your hands made me – BDB 793 I, cf. Job 10:8; 31:15; Ps. 139:15
3. work of Your hands – Job 10:3; 14:15; Ps. 138:8
4. both VERBS appear in Deut. 32:6 and refer to corporate Israel

Humans are special creatures created in God's image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) for fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:8). Each is a unique creation (cf. Ps. 139:14-16). To recognize this is a biblical worldview! We are not the result of random events or processes. There is purpose in each person's creation.

▣ **“Give me understanding”** This is the only IMPERATIVAL (Ps. 119:73-80) prayer request in this stanza (BDB 106, KB 122, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE), but there are several JUSSIVES.

Only God can open the mind of fallen human creatures to learn (BDB 540, KB 531, *Qal* COHORTATIVE) about Himself by understanding His revelation. This learning (like the VERB *shema* of Deut. 6:4-9) implies daily lifestyle application of God's revelation.

119:74 “may” This is the sign of a JUSSIVE construction (cf. Ps. 119:74,76,77,78,79,80). These also reflect prayer requests.

In this verse there are two.

1. see – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. be glad – BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

Notice these realities are based on the psalmist's

1. patience (lit. “await,” “hope,” Ps. 119:74b)
2. knowledge of God's revelation (Ps. 119:75)
3. divine affliction (119:75; 67,71)

The VERB “wait” (BDB 403, KB 407, *Piel* PERFECT) denotes patience. Usually this VERB denotes hope/patience in God Himself (cf. Job 13:15; Ps. 31:24; 33:22; 38:15; 39:7; 42:5,11; 43:5; 69:3; 130:7; 131:3), but in Psalm 119 the theological concept of God's revelation (see Special Topic: Terms for God's Revelation) is substituted for God Himself. They are the same. To know God's word is to know God. One is informative and the other relational but they must go together!

119:75 “in faithfulness You afflicted me” YHWH is true to His word and faithful to His purposes for His faithful followers. There is a larger purpose in creation. See Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan. Even “affliction” has an ultimate purpose (cf. Lam. 3:19-38; Heb. 5:8; 12:1-13). The goal of salvation is not just fellowship in some future state/place but intimate fellowship now, which reflects the family characteristics of the followers of YHWH to those who He created, but due to the Fall, do not yet know Him!

It must be remembered that problems in this life have several possible origins/purposes.

1. judgment on sin to restore or initiate a relationship of faith in YHWH (cf. Ps. 69:26)
2. the result of the Fall. Evil has entered our world. Bad things happen that are not God's will (see Special Topic: Tribulation).
3. they cause us to trust God and develop our faith (cf. Rom. 5:3-5; Heb. 5:8; 12:10-11)

Since I never know which one it is, I choose to focus on #3! My worldview is that nothing just happens to God's people!

▣ **“judgments”** See Special Topic: Judge, Judgment, Justice.

▣ **“righteous”** See Special Topic: Righteousness.

119:76 “Your lovingkindness” See Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*).

▣ **“According to Your word”** This is a recurrent theme (cf. Ps. 119:65). God is true to His revelation.

119:77 “Your law is my delight” See note at Ps. 119:70.

119:78a This reflects Ps. 119:69-70. The arrogant will be ashamed (see note at Ps. 119:6), but not the faithful psalmist (cf. 119:80).

119:78b “I shall meditate on Your precepts” Faithful followers spend time in God’s word. They study, contemplate, and attempt to apply what it says. Our thoughts become our actions. Meditation on revelation is essential (cf. Ps. 1:2; 119:15,23,48,78,97,148). How often do you spend time in God’s word?

119:79 This verse asserts the truth that seekers after God need to see Him in those who claim to follow Him. Faithful followers should be lights that lead to God.

▣ **“those who know”** See Special Topic: Know.

119:80 “blameless” See Special Topic: Blameless, Innocent, Guiltless, and Without Reproach.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:81-88 (*Kaph*)

⁸¹**My soul languishes for Your salvation;
I wait for Your word.**
⁸²**My eyes fail *with longing* for Your word,
While I say, “When will You comfort me?”**
⁸³**Though I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
I do not forget Your statutes.**
⁸⁴**How many are the days of Your servant?
When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me?**
⁸⁵**The arrogant have dug pits for me,
Men who are not in accord with Your law.**
⁸⁶**All Your commandments are faithful;
They have persecuted me with a lie; help me!**
⁸⁷**They almost destroyed me on earth,
But as for me, I did not forsake Your precepts.**
⁸⁸**Revive me according to Your lovingkindness,
So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.**

119:81-88 This stanza is dominated by PERFECT TENSE VERBS. The psalmist felt attacked!

1. those who persecute me, Ps. 119:84
2. the arrogant have dug pits for me, Ps. 119:85
3. men who are not in accord with Your law, Ps. 119:85
4. they have persecuted me with a lie, Ps. 119:86
5. they almost destroyed me on earth, Ps. 119:87

He claims to be faithful to God’s word and pleads with God to act on his behalf.

1. help me – BDB 740, KB 810, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, Ps. 119:86
2. revive/preserve me – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, Ps. 119:88

119:81 “soul” This is the term *nephesh* (BDB 659). For a full discussion see note at Gen. 35:18 online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

▣ **“languishes”** The psalmist uses several VERBS to describe his physical and mental state.

1. languishes – BDB 477, KB 476, *Qal* PERFECT, Ps. 119:81
2. waits – BDB 403, KB 407, *Piel* PERFECT, Ps. 119:81
3. eyes fail – BDB 477, KB 476, *Qal* PERFECT, Ps. 119:82
4. become like a wineskin in the smoke – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* PERFECT. This is an unusual and rare idiom. It seems to mean “burnt” and “brittle. But because of the next line it could denote smoke blindness (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12).

119:82 In the midst of the problems of life and personal attacks, even faithful followers call out to God with “why?” or “when will it be over?”

119:83 The idiom of Ps. 119:83a is unusual and ambiguous (see note at Ps. 119:81, #4).

The second line is an attempt by the psalmist to assert his own faithfulness (cf. Ps. 119:81b, 87b; also note Ps. 119:61, 141, 153, 176). His persecutors deserve God’s judgment but he does not. He throws himself on the faithfulness of God (cf. Ps. 119:88a).

119:84 “How many are the days of Your servant” This asserts

1. the foreknowledge of God (cf. Matt. 10:29-31)
2. the limited time of human life (cf. Ps. 39:4)
3. a call to act appropriately in the time each of us has (cf. Ps. 90:12; Matt. 6:25-34; Eph. 5:15-16)

119:85 “dug pits” This is an idiom from hunting. A pit was dug to capture prey. It became a metaphor for human treachery (cf. Ps. 7:15; 57:6; Jer. 18:22).

The NEB and REB see the Hebrew root “tales” (BDB 967) instead of “pit” (BDB 1001). This is only a change from ψ to ψ .

119:86 The “commandments” here may refer to the “curses” on those who violate God’s revealed will (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30). These are the persecutors referred to in Ps. 119:85b who do not live in accordance with God’s law.

They are the exact opposite of the faithful followers (cf. Ps. 119:81, 82, 83, 87).

▣ **“help me”** This IMPERATIVE (see note at Ps. 119:81-88) is similar to Ps. 109:26. God’s covenant loyalty (i.e., *hesed*, cf. Ps. 119:88a; see Special Topic: Lovingkindness) is the basis of mankind’s hope. It is His unchanging character of mercy and grace that brings hope and peace in this fallen world. See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God.

119:88a The UBS *Handbook* (p. 1022) mentions that the MT and LXX have the VERB “spare my life” (BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* IMPERATIVE), while the DSS text has “be kind to me” (cf. TEV).

119:88b This is the desire of God’s faithful followers (cf. Ps. 19:14)!

The VERB “keep” (BDB 1036, KB 1581) is a *Qal* COHORTATIVE. See Special Topic: Keep. Obedience to revelation is crucial and is evidence of one’s faith relationship with YHWH and His Messiah (cf. Luke 6:46).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:89-96 (*Lamedh*)

⁸⁹Forever, O LORD,

Your word is settled in heaven.

⁹⁰**Your faithfulness *continues* throughout all generations;**

You established the earth, and it stands.

⁹¹**They stand this day according to Your ordinances,**

For all things are Your servants.

⁹²**If Your law had not been my delight,**

Then I would have perished in my affliction.

⁹³**I will never forget Your precepts,**

For by them You have revived me.

⁹⁴**I am Yours, save me;**

For I have sought Your precepts.

⁹⁵**The wicked wait for me to destroy me;**

I shall diligently consider Your testimonies.

⁹⁶**I have seen a limit to all perfection;**

Your commandment is exceedingly broad.

119:89 “Forever” See Special Topic: Forever (‘*olam*).

▣ “O LORD” See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

▣ “Your word is settled in heaven” The VERB’S (BDB 662, KB 714, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) basic meaning is “to stand.” This is the only usage of this VERB in this idiom.

The idea of God’s settled/established creation (cf. Isa. 54:18) is the thrust of Ps. 119:90-91 (different VERB, BDB 763, KB 840). Notice the things that “stand.”

1. YHWH’s word (Ps. 119:89b, 91a)
2. YHWH’s faithfulness
3. YHWH’s creation

They are all His servants (Ps. 119:91b). But note Ps. 119:96 seems to imply a contrast. However, the thrust of the contrast is uncertain.

119:90a This truth is paralleled in Ps. 36:5 and 89:1-2. They speak of the eternality of God, His word, and creation. Faithfulness characterizes

1. God Himself
2. His revelation in word
3. His revelation in creation (cf. Ps. 119:91; 148:1-6; Jer. 31:35-37)

119:91 “all things are Your servants” This idiom refers to all created things (i.e., Genesis 1, cf. Ps. 103:19; Eccl. 11:5; Jer. 10:16; 51:19). God’s word brought the physical into existence and sustains it. The physical has its limits (cf. Ps. 119:96), but God’s word has no limits.

119:92 “If” Notice the conditional nature of the following statements about the psalmist who needs saving/reviving and God’s revelation, which is eternal. Notice the number of “I’s” in Ps. 119:92-96 in the NASB (6) which describe the psalmist’s thoughts and actions.

119:93 “I will never forget Your precepts” See note at Ps. 119:83b.

▣ **“For by them You have revived me”** This VERB is a *Piel* PERFECT which denotes God’s completed action of salvation. This is contrasted with the IMPERATIVE of Ps. 119:88.

119:94 “I am Yours” The psalmist is asserting that, like creation, he belongs to YHWH, the creator of all things which serve His purposes.

▣ **“save me”** This is a *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, the only IMPERATIVE in this stanza. See Special Topic: Salvation (OT). The psalmist feels attacked (Ps. 119:95a). In Ps. 119:92 the term “affliction” could refer to the agency of “the wicked” or God (Ps. 119:67,71).

YHWH saves those who seek/trust Him (cf. Ps. 13:5; 25:2; 31:14; 52:8; 56:4; 86:2). There are two aspects to the covenant (the Divine and the human individual)!

▣ **“I have sought Your precepts”** This idea of faithful followers actively seeking (BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PERFECT) God’s revelation also occurs in Ps. 119:2,45,155. There is a Divine aspect to revelation and an individual aspect to revelation!

119:96 This verse is difficult to understand. However, whatever is “limited” (seems to refer to the created order) is in contrast to God’s eternal (lit. “broad”) revelation (i.e., has no limit).

The term “perfection” (BDB 479) is found only here.

The psalmist calls on the eternal One to save him. The wicked perish, creation will perish (i.e., 2 Pet. 3:10,12), but the eternal One remembers His faithful followers!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:97-104 (*Mem*)

⁹⁷**O how I love Your law!**

It is my meditation all the day.

⁹⁸**Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies,**

For they are ever mine.

⁹⁹**I have more insight than all my teachers,**

For Your testimonies are my meditation.

¹⁰⁰**I understand more than the aged,**

Because I have observed Your precepts.

¹⁰¹**I have restrained my feet from every evil way,**

That I may keep Your word.

¹⁰²**I have not turned aside from Your ordinances,**

For You Yourself have taught me.

¹⁰³**How sweet are Your words to my taste!**

Yes, *sweeter* than honey to my mouth!

¹⁰⁴**From Your precepts I get understanding;**

Therefore I hate every false way.

119:97 “O how I love Your law” In many ways Psalms 19 and 119 are the theological opposite of the historical books’ and prophetic books’ presentation of how Israel acted towards God’s revelation.

Love (BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Psalm 119:47, 48, 113, 127, 163, 165) is characterized as “meditation all the day” (cf. Ps. 119:15,48,99).

To love is (cf. Deut. 6:5)

1. to spend time with
2. to rejoice in
3. to obey
4. to pass on to others

The phrase translated by NASB “all day long” is the Hebrew word *‘olam*. See Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*).

119:98 A knowledge of God’s revelation makes the faithful follower wiser than

1. his enemies, Ps. 119:98
2. his teachers, Ps. 119:99
3. the aged (i.e., experienced), Ps. 119:100

119:100 Notice that wisdom is not just knowledge but lifestyle obedience (cf. Ps. 119:100b). This obedience is described as

1. restrained my feet from every evil way (cf. Ps. 1:1; 5:8; 16:11; 139:24; Pro. 1:15; 4:14)
2. not turned aside from Your ordinances (an idiom for deviation from God’s revealed path, cf. Deut. 17:20; Jos. 23:6)

The first name for the church was “The Way” (cf. Acts 9:2; 18:25,26; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22).

119:101b “That I may keep Your word” This is the key theological truth. See Special Topic: Keep.

119:102b In Psalm 119 God and His revelation are merged. To know Him is to know His word. God is the teacher and content of revelation. The request for God to teach the psalmist is found in Ps. 119:12,26,33, 64,108,124,135,171.

119:103 This verse reflects Ps. 19:10b but with a different word for “sweet” (BDB 576, KB 594, *Niphal* PERFECT, lit. “smooth,” found only here in the OT). The idiom “sweetness” is a way to describe how the teachings of God make life enjoyable and peaceful!

119:104 There is only one proper source of truth, life, peace, and joy—YHWH. To know Him is to aggressively reject (lit. “hate”) all other ways (i.e., Ps. 119:53,128,163; Pro. 13:5; Amos 5:15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:105-112 (*Nun*)

¹⁰⁵**Your word is a lamp to my feet**

And a light to my path.

¹⁰⁶**I have sworn and I will confirm it,**

That I will keep Your righteous ordinances.

¹⁰⁷**I am exceedingly afflicted;**

Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word.

¹⁰⁸**O accept the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD,**

And teach me Your ordinances.

¹⁰⁹**My life is continually in my hand,**

Yet I do not forget Your law.

¹¹⁰**The wicked have laid a snare for me,**

Yet I have not gone astray from Your precepts.

¹¹¹**I have inherited Your testimonies forever,**

For they are the joy of my heart.

¹¹²I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes

Forever, *even* to the end.

119:105 There is no VERB in this verse. God's word illumines life (cf. Ps. 43:3; Pro. 6:23; 2 Pet. 1:19). Life is described as a path, a clearly marked path, marked by Divine revelation (cf. Ps. 89:15; Isa. 2:5; 1 John 1:7). To deviate to the right or left brings disaster.

We know from the NT that God's ultimate revelation is Jesus (cf. John 1:1-14; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:13-16; Heb. 1:2-3). He is the light of the world (cf. John 1:4; 8:12; 9:5).

119:106 The psalmist asserts that he has walked on God's path of revelation. The VERB forms imply an initial decision and a continuing commitment to God's revelation. Biblical faith is a "gate" (initial, personal encounter with God) and "a path/way" (continuing lifestyle, daily obedience). Jesus teaches this in Matt. 7:13-14. It is a decision and a discipleship.

In modern Jewish life, young people study the Hebrew Bible, and at age 13 for boys and 12 for girls, they commit themselves to keep it (*Bar-Mitzvah*, *Bat-Mitzvah*).

119:107 The nature of the affliction is uncertain. It could be

1. the wicked, Ps. 119:110 (cf. Job 24:13)
2. God Himself for the psalmist's previous disobedience (cf. Ps. 119:67,71)

▣ **"Revive me"** This is literally "give me life" (BDB 310, KB 309) and is a recurrent request (cf. Ps. 119:25,37,40,50,88,93,107,149,154,156,159,175). Here it probably means physical life, but one who knows God's revelation also knows it denotes a healthy spiritual life also. Life comes "according to Your word."

119:108a This verse and others like it are the origin of the Jewish people worshiping YHWH in words and not sacrifices because their temple has been destroyed (cf. Isa. 57:19; Hosea 14:2; Heb. 13:15).

119:108b Understanding is impossible without Divine help. God seeks to open our minds to Himself and His guidelines for life (cf. Ps. 119:12,26,64,66,68,124,135,171).

119:109 "soul" This is the Hebrew term *nephesh* (BDB 659). See full note at Gen. 35:18 online.

▣ **"in Your hand"** This Hebrew idiom can be understood in two ways.

1. in a negative sense, where "hand" refers to power over another (cf. Jdgs. 12:3; 1 Sam. 19:5; 28:21; Job 13:14, see Special Topic: Hand)
2. in a positive sense, where "hand" refers to God's keeping power and protection (i.e., Ps. 31:5)

The MT has "in my hand," while the LXX has "in Your hand." The first would denote that following God's revelation means opposition in a fallen world. The second would denote God's keeping power and care (cf. NJB).

119:110 The psalmist is being accused of some covenant violation but he asserts his fidelity to God's revelation.

The "snare," like the "pit" of Ps. 119:85, is an animal trap, here used as a metaphor for human aggressive attacks.

119:111-112 God’s revelation to Israel was evidence of their special relationship to Him. The psalmist affirms his loyalty and obedience to that revelation. See Special Topic: Keep.

119:111 “they are the joy of my heart” Israel gloried in God’s revelation (cf. Ps. 1:2; 19:7-11). To those who know God it is not a burden but a delight (cf. Ps. 119:14,16,24,35,47,70,77,92,143,162,174).

119:112 “forever” See Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*).

▣ **“to the end”** See the same expressing of continual commitment (Ps. 119:106) to God’s revelation in Ps. 119:33.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:113-120 (*Samekh*)

- ¹¹³**I hate those who are double-minded,
But I love Your law.**
- ¹¹⁴**You are my hiding place and my shield;
I wait for Your word.**
- ¹¹⁵**Depart from me, evildoers,
That I may observe the commandments of my God.**
- ¹¹⁶**Sustain me according to Your word, that I may live;
And do not let me be ashamed of my hope.**
- ¹¹⁷**Uphold me that I may be safe,
That I may have regard for Your statutes continually.**
- ¹¹⁸**You have rejected all those who wander from Your statutes,
For their deceitfulness is useless.**
- ¹¹⁹**You have removed all the wicked of the earth *like* dross;
Therefore I love Your testimonies.**
- ¹²⁰**My flesh trembles for fear of You,
And I am afraid of Your judgments.**

119:113 “I hate those who are double-minded” The ADJECTIVE “double-minded” (BDB 704 II) occurs only here. The JPSOA translates it “divided heart.” It is related to the NOUN (BDB 704) found in 1 Kgs. 18:21. See James 1:8; 4:8.

This stanza contrasts two types of individuals.

1. the psalmist’s persecutors
 - a. double-minded, Ps. 119:113a
 - b. evildoers, Ps. 119:115
 - c. those who wander from God’s statutes, Ps. 119:118a
 - d. deceitful, Ps. 119:118b
 - e. wicked, Ps. 119:119
2. the psalmist
 - a. loves God’s law, Ps. 119:113b
 - b. waits for God’s word, Ps. 119:114b
 - c. observes God’s commandments, Ps. 119:115b
 - d. has regard for God’s statutes, Ps. 119:117b

- e. loves God's testimonies, Ps. 119:119b
- f. fears God's judgments, Ps. 119:120b

▣ **“I love”** The stark contrast denotes the wide gap that develops between those who love God and His revelation and those who do not! There is no neutral ground.

119:114 “God is my hiding place” This NOUN (BDB 712) denotes a shelter.

1. the tabernacle/temple – Ps. 27:5
2. God Himself – Ps. 31:20; 32:7,10
3. shelter of His wings – Ps. 61:5
4. shadow of the Almighty – Ps. 91:1 (see Special Topic: Shadow As A Metaphor For Protection and Care)

▣ **“my shield”** The NOUN (BDB 171) is personified as YHWH's protection of His followers.

1. Abraham – Gen. 15:1
2. Israel – Deut. 33:29; Ps. 33:20; 59:11; 115:9,10
3. the psalmist – Ps. 3:3; 18:2; 28:7; 84:9
4. righteous man – Ps. 5:12
5. the upright in heart – Ps. 7:10
6. those who take refuge in Him – Ps. 18:30,35; Pro. 30:5
7. those who walk uprightly – Ps. 84:11; Pro. 2:7
8. those who fear Him – Ps. 115:11
9. His king – Ps. 144:2

▣ **“I wait for Your word”** The VERB (BDB 403, KB 407, *Piel* PERFECT) denotes hope and patient trust that God will fulfill His promises (cf. Ps. 31:24; 33:18,22; 69:3; 119:43,49,74,81,114,147).

119:115-117 These lines of poetry all begin with an IMPERATIVE (i.e., prayer request). All roots start with a *samekh*.

1. depart from me evildoer – BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. sustain me according to Your word – BDB 701, KB 759, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. uphold me – BDB 703, KB 761, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Notice how the second line gives the desired result.

1. that I may observe the commandments – *Qal* COHORTATIVE
2. that I may live – *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
3. that I may be safe – *Niphal* COHORTATIVE (Ps. 119:117a)
4. that I may have regard for Your statutes (Ps. 119:117b)

119:118 This verse hints of idolatry (cf. Isa. 28:15; Jer. 10:14; 51:17), not just disobedience to the covenant.

The term “reject” (BDB 699, KB 756) is found only here and in Lam. 1:15. This is another example of a rare term chosen to fit the acrostic form.

119:119-120 Notice that “love” (cf. Deut. 6:4-6) and “fear” (Ps. 119:120) go together. There is a respect due the God of the universe (i.e., NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 529), who is also the Savior of the universe, who is also the Judge of the universe!

The term “tremble” (BDB 702, KB 760, *Qal* PERFECT) is found only here and the *Piel* only in Job 4:15. A related form (i.e., different vowels) is found only in Jer. 51:27. This is another rare word used to fit the acrostic form.

119:119

NASB “You have removed the wicked”

NKJV “You put away all the wicked”

NRSV “All the wicked. . .you count as dross”

NJB “In Your sight all the wicked. . .are like rust”

JPSOA “You do away with the wicked”

LXX “All sinners. . .I counted as transgressors”

The BDB 991 and KB 1409 have several suggestions for the *Hiphil* of this root.

1. cause to cease, put to an end, cf. Ps. 46:9
2. exterminate, destroy, cf. Ps.8:2; 19:119
3. cause to desist from
4. remove, cf. Ps. 89:44
5. cause to fail

The UBS Text Project (p. 411) has two options.

1. you made stop
2. you consider/considered

It gives a “C” rating (considerable doubt) to #2.

The first word of Ps. 119:119 is “dross” (BDB 691), which is used out of its normal order to fit the acrostic pattern. It refers to the waste product of purifying metals. It is useless and is thrown away.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:121-128 (*Ayin*)

¹²¹**I have done justice and righteousness;**

Do not leave me to my oppressors.

¹²²**Be surety for Your servant for good;**

Do not let the arrogant oppress me.

¹²³**My eyes fail *with longing* for Your salvation**

And for Your righteous word.

¹²⁴**Deal with Your servant according to Your lovingkindness**

And teach me Your statutes.

¹²⁵**I am Your servant; give me understanding,**

That I may know Your testimonies.

¹²⁶**It is time for the LORD to act,**

***For* they have broken Your law.**

¹²⁷**Therefore I love Your commandments**

Above gold, yes, above fine gold.

¹²⁸**Therefore I esteem right all *Your* precepts concerning everything,**

I hate every false way.

119:121-128 This stanza follows the common pattern. The psalmist describes himself in contrast to those who oppose him.

1. the psalmist
 - a. he has done justice (BDB 1048), Ps. 119:121
 - b. he has done righteousness (BDB 841), Ps. 119:121
 - c. his eyes fail for longing for God’s salvation, Ps. 119:123a
 - d. his eyes fail for longing for God’s righteous word, Ps. 119:123b

- e. he is God's servant, Ps. 119:122,124,125
- f. he loves God's commandments, Ps. 119:127
- g. he esteems the right of all God's revelations, Ps. 119:128a
- h. he hates every false way, Ps. 119:128b (cf. Ps. 31:6; 119:104,163; Pro. 13:5)
- 2. his opponents are characterized as
 - a. my oppressors (BDB 798, KB 897, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Ps. 119:121b
 - b. the arrogant, Ps. 119:122b (cf. Ps. 119:21,51,69,78,85)
 - c. they break God's law, Ps. 119:126b
 - d. they love the false way (implied), Ps. 119:128b

119:121 “justice” See Special Topic: Judge, Judgment, and Justice.

▣ **“righteousness”** See Special Topic: Righteousness.

119:122 This is the first of five prayer requests.

- 1. be surety for Your servant for good, Ps. 119:122a – BDB 786, KB 876, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (lit. “give in pledge”), cf. Job 17:3; Isa. 38:14
- 2. do not let the arrogant (BDB 267) oppress me, Ps. 119:122b – BDB 798, KB 897, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. The *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE is used in Ps. 119:121 to characterize his foes.
- 3. deal with Your servant according to Your lovingkindness, Ps. 119:124a – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE. YHWH's *hesed* (BDB 338) is a recurrent theme, cf. Ps. 51:1; 106:45; 109:26; 119:88,149,159.
- 4. teach me Your statutes, Ps. 119:124b – BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, this is another recurrent theme, cf. Ps. 119:12,26,64,108,135,171
- 5. give me understanding, Ps. 119:125a – BDB 106, KB 122, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, this is another recurrent theme, cf. Job 32:8; Ps. 119:27,34,73,125,130,144,169

▣ **“for good”** Dahood might be correct (see AB, vol. 17A, p. 187) that the *lamedh* before “good” (BDB 373 II) may denote the VOCATIVE (i.e., O Good One), as it does in Ps. 119:126 before YHWH, translated “O LORD.”

▣ The NASB Study Bible (p. 869) makes the interesting observation, following the Jewish Masora notes, that Ps. 119:122 is the only verse in Psalm 119 in which a direct or indirect (i.e., Ps. 119:90,121,132) reference to God's revelation (see Special Topic: Terms for God's Revelation) does not appear. However, Dahood in AB (p. 193) asserts that 119:37,90,121,122,132, and 149 do not have a specific word for God's revelation.

119:123 Salvation usually refers to physical deliverance (see Special Topic: Salvation [OT]) but here the next line implies a longing for all of God's promises to come to fruition (implying national and even eschatological promises).

119:124 “lovingkindness” See Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*).

119:125 “That I may know” In this context “know” (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* COHORTATIVE) surely refers to comprehension. However, the Hebrew VERB often denotes an element of personal relationship. See Special Topic: Know.

119:126 “It is time for the LORD to act” Faithful followers take God’s word and promises seriously. They see the evil and chaos in creation and longingly desire for God to intervene in human history and fulfill all His word (cf. Rom. 8:18-25)!

119:127b This reminds me of Ps. 19:10 (cf. Ps. 119:103)! Oh, how precious is God’s self-disclosure in revelation. He has not left believers in the hopeless relativity of this fallen world/age. He has communicated His will and way for us to find and maintain intimate fellowship with Him, even now!

119:128 This is the faithful followers’ worldview. Believers surely do not understand all of God’s revelation, but they trust God. This is exactly opposite of those who

1. choose some of His revelations but not all (cf. Ps. 119:113)
2. choose other gods (i.e., idolatry, cf. Ps. 31:6; 119:104; Jer. 10:3)

There are several questions about Ps. 119:128.

1. Why does it start with “therefore,” when this does not logically connect to Ps. 119:127? Possibly to get the acrostic to fit (119:127 also starts with “therefore” for acrostic purposes).
2. Why the repeated use of “all”?
3. Why the VERB, נָשׂוּ (BDB 448, KB 449, *Piel* PERFECT), which is usually translated “be smooth,” “be straight,” or “be right.” Possibly it denotes the true way/path (i.e., “righteous” as a measuring stick/reed, cf. Pro. 3:6) versus “the false path/way.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:129-136 (*Pe*)

- ¹²⁹**Your testimonies are wonderful;
Therefore my soul observes them.**
- ¹³⁰**The unfolding of Your words gives light;
It gives understanding to the simple.**
- ¹³¹**I opened my mouth wide and panted,
For I longed for Your commandments.**
- ¹³²**Turn to me and be gracious to me,
After Your manner with those who love Your name.**
- ¹³³**Establish my footsteps in Your word,
And do not let any iniquity have dominion over me.**
- ¹³⁴**Redeem me from the oppression of man,
That I may keep Your precepts.**
- ¹³⁵**Make Your face shine upon Your servant,
And teach me Your statutes.**
- ¹³⁶**My eyes shed streams of water,
Because they do not keep Your law.**

119:129 “wonderful” See Special Topic: Wonderful Things.

▣ **“soul”** This is *nephesh* (BDB 659), which denotes a person’s life. See full note at Gen. 35:18 online.

▣ **“observes them”** This is a recurrent emphasis (cf. Ps. 119:2,22,33,34,56,69,100,115,129,145,168, see Special Topic: Keep). Biblical faith is not just light but walking in the light (cf. Ps. 89:15; 119:105; Pro. 6:23; Isa. 2:5; 1 John 1:5-7).

Notice the same emphasis on obedience in Ps. 119:134b, “know,” *Qal* COHORTATIVE (BDB 1036, KB 1581).

110:130 “The unfolding” This is the only use of the word (BDB 836) in the OT. Again a rare word is used to fit the acrostic form.

▣ **“the simple”** This word (BDB 834) can have a negative (i.e., Pro. 1:22) or positive connotation. Here it is positive. God desires all humans to know Him and His will. Here it denotes a teachable person (cf. Ps. 19:7) but one who, for whatever reason, does not know God’s revelation.

119:131 These are three idioms for a strong desire.

1. open mouth – Job 29:23
2. panting – Ps. 42:1
3. longing – Ps. 119:20

The last word (BDB 383) is found only here in the OT.

119:132-135 There is a series of IMPERATIVAL prayer requests.

1. turn to me – BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 25:16; 69:16
2. be gracious to me – BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. establish my footsteps – BDB 465, KB 464, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
4. redeem me – BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (see Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem)
5. shine upon Your servant – BDB 21, KB 24, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
6. teach me – BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

There is also one more request stated in a negative (i.e., “do not let any have dominion over me,” cf. Ps. 19:13, but a different VERB). It is a *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, Ps. 119:133b.

119:132b What a beautiful characterization of God’s faithful followers (cf. Ps. 5:11; 69:36; Isa. 56:6)!
The name represents God Himself. See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

119:133 “Establish my footsteps” This is the imagery of a clear, smooth, unobstructed path (cf. Ps. 17:5), which is made possible by God’s revelation, actions, and promises (i.e., Isa. 40:3-4).

119:135 “Make Your face shine upon Your servant” This is an allusion to the Aaronic blessing of Num. 6:24-26. It is alluded to several times in the Psalter (cf. Ps. 4:6; 31:16; 67:1; 80:3,7,19, and here).

The opposite idiom would be for YHWH to hide His face (cf. Ps. 10:11; 13:1; 22:24; 27:9; 44:24; 69:17; 88:15; 102:2; 104:29; 143:7; Isa. 57:17).

119:136 This is an important verse because the majority of the references to those who do not keep God’s law call out for judgment (i.e., Ps. 119:53,158). This one shows the psalmist’s grief and intercession for the wayward.

One wonders if the psalmist is thinking of his personal enemies or the sins of corporate Israel (cf. Jer. 9:1,18; 14:17; Lam. 3:48).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:137-144 (*Tsadhe*)

¹³⁷Righteous are You, O LORD,

And upright are Your judgments.

¹³⁸You have commanded Your testimonies in righteousness

And exceeding faithfulness.

¹³⁹**My zeal has consumed me,**

Because my adversaries have forgotten Your words.

¹⁴⁰**Your word is very pure,**

Therefore Your servant loves it.

¹⁴¹**I am small and despised,**

Yet I do not forget Your precepts.

¹⁴²**Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,**

And Your law is truth.

¹⁴³**Trouble and anguish have come upon me,**

Yet Your commandments are my delight.

¹⁴⁴**Your testimonies are righteous forever;**

Give me understanding that I may live.

119:137-144 This stanza contrasts the qualities of YHWH and/or His revelations with the psalmist's current conditions.

1. YHWH/His revelations are characterized as
 - a. righteous
 - (1) ADJECTIVE (BDB 843), Ps. 119:137
 - (2) NOUN (MASCULINE, BDB 841), Ps. 119:138,144 (FEMININE, BDB 842, Ps. 119:142)
 - b. upright (BDB 449), Ps. 119:137
 - c. faithful (ADVERB, BDB 547), Ps. 119:138, cf. Ps. 119:86
 - d. pure (BDB 864, KB 1057, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE), Ps. 119:140
 - e. eternal (BDB 761), Ps. 119:142,144
 - f. truth (BDB 54), Ps. 119:142
2. the psalmist
 - a. he has a zeal for God's revelation (or against his enemies) but his adversaries have forgotten them, Ps. 119:139
 - b. he loves God's revelation, Ps. 119:140
 - c. he is small and despised but does not forget God's revelation, Ps. 119:141
 - d. trouble and anguish have come upon him yet he delights in God's revelation, Ps. 119:143

119:137 "LORD" See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

119:139 In context it seems that the psalmist's "zeal" (BDB 888) is directed, not positively, toward God's word but against those who have forgotten His word (cf. Ps. 69:9; 119:53). This is opposite of Ps. 119:136.

119:140

NASB, NKJV	"very pure"
NRSV, LXX	"well tried"
TEV	"certain"
NJB, REB	"well tested"
JPSOA	"exceedingly pure"

The VERB (BDB 864, KB 1057, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) denotes that which has been refined by fire and the dross drained off leaving a pure metal.

119:141**NASB, NKJV,****NRSV, Peshitta “small”****TEV “unimportant”****NJB “puny”****JPSOA “belittled”****LXX “young”****REB “of little account”**

The question is, does the word (BDB 859 I) denote

1. age (cf. Gen. 43:33; 48:14; Jdgs. 6:15; Ps. 68:27)
2. physical size (cf. 1 Sam. 9:21; Isa. 60:22; Jer. 48:4; 49:20; 50:45)
3. social reputation (cf. Micah 5:2; and here)

▣ This is a classic example of OT role reversal. The faithful psalmist is called “despised” (BDB 102, KB 117, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) when it should be those who purposefully forget/ignore God’s revelation. Outward conditions (cf. Ps. 119:143) in this fallen world do not reflect the evaluation of the God who will one day set the record straight!

119:142 “true” See Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT.

119:143 This is the mystery of why the righteous suffer (cf. Job; Psalm 73). The psalmist keeps, loves, and acts on God’s revelation but still he suffers at the hands of godless men and fallen-age circumstances (i.e., illness, social unfairness, etc.).

The problem is not God or His word, but the fallen condition of creation (cf. Gen. 3:6,11-12,13; Ps. 14:3; Rom. 1:18-3:31).

119:144 The only IMPERATIVAL prayer request in the stanza is Ps. 119:144b (cf. 119:27,125). Note that understanding must result in godly living (BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in COHORTATIVE sense).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:145-152 (*Ooph*)**¹⁴⁵I cried with all my heart; answer me, O LORD!****I will observe Your statutes.****¹⁴⁶I cried to You; save me****And I shall keep Your testimonies.****¹⁴⁷I rise before dawn and cry for help;****I wait for Your words.****¹⁴⁸My eyes anticipate the night watches,****That I may meditate on Your word.****¹⁴⁹Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness;****Revive me, O LORD, according to Your ordinances.****¹⁵⁰Those who follow after wickedness draw near;****They are far from Your law.****¹⁵¹You are near, O LORD,****And all Your commandments are truth.**

¹⁵²**Of old I have known from Your testimonies
That You have founded them forever.**

119:145-152 As is so common in these acrostic strophes, the psalmist compares his actions and thoughts with those persecuting him.

1. the psalmist
 - a. I cried with all my heart, Ps. 119:145a
 - b. I will observe Your statutes, Ps. 119:145b
 - c. I cried to You, Ps. 119:146a
 - d. I shall keep Your testimonies, Ps. 119:146b
 - e. I rise before dawn and cry for help, Ps. 119:147a
 - f. I wait for Your words, Ps. 119:147b
 - g. That I may meditate on Your word, Ps. 119:148b
 - h. Of old I have known from Your testimonies, Ps. 119:152a
2. his oppressors
 - a. Those who follow after wickedness draw near, Ps. 119:150a
 - b. They are far from Your law, Ps. 119:150b

▣ In light of this comparison the psalmist makes four prayer requests.

1. answer me, Ps. 119:145a – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. save me, Ps. 119:146a – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. hear my voice, Ps. 119:149a – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. revive me, Ps. 119:149b – BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

This is an additional implied request in Ps. 119:151a. As the wicked draw near to him, he asserts YHWH is near, Ps. 119:151. It is a statement (no VERB) but also a prayer!

119:145 “with all my heart” This could be understood in two senses.

1. with all my being (like a similar idiom in Ps. 103:1, “all that is within me”)
2. asserting he is not a “double-minded” (cf. Ps. 119:113) or half-hearted follower (contrast David, a full heart with Solomon in his old age, a half heart)

▣ **“O LORD”** There are three VOCATIVES addressing YHWH in this stanza (Ps. 119:145,149,151). For “YHWH” see Special Topic: Names For Deity.

119:148 The psalmist cannot sleep because of

1. the attack of faithless Israelites (possibly idolaters)
2. his whole-hearted devotion to God’s revelation

119:149 The psalmist asks YHWH to act because of

1. His character of lovingkindness
2. His revelation (i.e., Scripture)
3. the folly of the wicked (i.e., this unfair and fallen age)

119:152 “Of old” This could refer to

1. God’s ancient acts (cf. Ps. 24:2; 78:69; 89:11; 102:25; 104:5) and revelations to the Patriarchs
2. the psalmist’s lengthy history of knowing and trusting God and His revelation

▣ “forever” See Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:153-160 (*Resh*)

- ¹⁵³Look upon my affliction and rescue me,
For I do not forget Your law.
- ¹⁵⁴Plead my cause and redeem me;
Revive me according to Your word.
- ¹⁵⁵Salvation is far from the wicked,
For they do not seek Your statutes.
- ¹⁵⁶Great are Your mercies, O LORD;
Revive me according to Your ordinances.
- ¹⁵⁷Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
Yet I do not turn aside from Your testimonies.
- ¹⁵⁸I behold the treacherous and loathe *them*,
Because they do not keep Your word.
- ¹⁵⁹Consider how I love Your precepts;
Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness.
- ¹⁶⁰The sum of Your word is truth,
And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.

119:153-160 There is a series (8) of IMPERATIVAL prayer requests based on God’s character (cf. Psalm 119:156a) and the psalmist’s obedience to His revelation. This is the essence of covenant (see Special Topic: Covenant).

- 1-2. look upon, Ps. 119:153,159 – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. rescue me, Ps. 119:153 – BDB 322, KB 321, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
4. plead my cause, Ps. 119:154 – BDB 936, KB 1224, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 35:23-24; 43:1
5. redeem me, Ps. 119:154 – BDB 322, KB 321, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
- 6-8. revive me, Ps. 119:154,156,159 – BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* IMPERATIVES

119:153 “my affliction” The exact nature of the affliction is never stated but there are two main possibilities.

1. God-sent problems and adversaries (cf. Ps. 119:67,71)
2. personal enemies (this fits this context best)
 - a. the wicked, Ps. 119:155
 - b. they do not seek Your statutes, Ps. 119:155
 - c. my persecutors, Ps. 119:157
 - d. my adversaries, Ps. 119:157
 - e. the treacherous, Ps. 119:158
 - f. those who do not keep God’s revelation, Ps. 119:158

▣ **“For I do not forget Your law”** Remember the Psalms are written within the theological scope of the performance-based Mosaic covenant (cf. Ps. 119:154b,156b,159b) The psalmist highlights his fidelity.

1. I do not forget Your law, Ps. 119:143, cf. Ps. 119:83,109,141
2. they do not seek Your statutes but I do (implied), Ps. 119:155
3. I do not turn aside from Your testimonies, Ps. 119:157

4. they do not keep Your word, but I do (implied), Ps. 119:158
5. I love Your precepts, Ps. 119:159

119:154 “Plead my cause” This is a court word. One day all conscious life (angelic and human) will stand before God to give an account of the gift of life (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15). Romans 8:31-39 records the imagery.

1. God as Judge
2. Satan as the prosecuting attorney
3. Jesus as the advocate for faithful followers
4. angels as the spectators (cf. 1 Cor. 4:9; Eph. 2:7; 3:10)

This phrase may also denote YHWH as a “kinsman redeemer” who advocates on behalf of a relative (cf. Lev. 25:23-28; Ruth 3; Job 19:23-27; Pro. 23:11; Jer. 50:34; 51:36; Lam. 3:58).

119:155 “salvation” See Special Topic: Salvation (OT).

119:156-157 Notice the two words from the same root (BDB 912 I), “great,” Ps. 119:156 and “many,” Ps. 119:157.

There are many enemies (cf. Ps. 119:157) but there is also a great God (Ps. 119:156). This same truth is expressed in 1 Peter where one word (variegated) describes

1. manifold temptation, 1 Pet. 1:6
2. the manifold grace of God, 1 Pet. 4:10

119:159 “I . . . loathe them” This seems harsh to NT believers. But remember this is the Mosaic covenant. Human emotions are often stated in hyperbolic imagery. The psalmist’s love for God and His word causes him to react aggressively (cf. Ps. 139:21) toward those who

1. reject it
2. accept only selected parts of it
3. play the hypocrite

God Himself has revealed His own attitude (cf. Ps. 95:10) toward those who reject His revelation in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30. To whom much is given, much is required (cf. Luke 12:48). The adversaries of the psalmist seem to be fellow Israelites.

119:160 There is no VERB in this verse. The NASB provides two “to be” VERBS.

▣ **“The sum”** This means “the whole,” which forms a better parallel with the next line of poetry than “essence.”

▣ **“truth”** This is not truth versus falsehood but faithfulness versus unfaithfulness. God’s word is the exact opposite of fallen humanity’s word. See Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT.

▣ **“everlasting”** See Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*).

▣ **“righteous”** See Special Topic: Righteousness.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:161-168 (*Shin*)

¹⁶¹Princes persecute me without cause,
But my heart stands in awe of Your words.

¹⁶²**I rejoice at Your word,
As one who finds great spoil.**
¹⁶³**I hate and despise falsehood,
But I love Your law.**
¹⁶⁴**Seven times a day I praise You,
Because of Your righteous ordinances.**
¹⁶⁵**Those who love Your law have great peace,
And nothing causes them to stumble.**
¹⁶⁶**I hope for Your salvation, O LORD,
And do Your commandments.**
¹⁶⁷**My soul keeps Your testimonies,
And I love them exceedingly.**
¹⁶⁸**I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies,
For all my ways are before You.**

119:161-168 This stanza is characterized by PERFECT VERBS which denote complete, finished, accomplished action. The psalmist is asserting what he has become because of God and His revelation.

1. my heart stands in awe of Your words, Ps. 119:161b, cf. Ps. 119:120
2. I rejoice at Your word, Ps. 119:162a
3. I hate and despise falsehood, Ps. 119:163a, cf. Ps. 119:104,118; Pro. 13:5
4. I love Your law, Ps. 119:163b
5. I praise You, seven times a day, Ps. 119:164a
6. those who love (i.e., of which the psalmist is one) Your law, Ps. 119:165a
7. I hope for Your salvation, Ps. 119:166a
8. I do Your commandments, Ps. 119:166b
9. my soul keeps Your testimonies, Ps. 119:167a
10. I love Your testimonies, Ps. 119:167b
11. I keep Your precepts and testimonies, Ps. 119:168a
12. all my ways are before You, Ps. 119:168b

119:161a The term “princes” (BDB 978) has a wide semantic usage which encompasses civil, tribal, and religious leaders (cf. Ps. 119:23). The author of Psalm 119 was not in this social category and is often persecuted by those in power.

119:161b It is surprising that this line of poetry expresses a fearful awe of God’s revelation, and the next line speaks of rejoicing in it. Yet both of these emotions are true of Scripture. It brings to fallen mankind fear, hope, peace, and joy!

The JPSOA translates “stands in awe” (BDB 808, KB 922, *Qal* PERFECT) as “my heart thrills at Your word” to form a parallel with Ps. 119:162a.

119:162b Wealth is not associated with physical things but with a knowledge of God’s revelation and a willingness to act on it!

119:163 “seven times” See Special Topic: Symbolic Numbers in Scripture.

119:165 This verse gives two specific benefits of loving God's revelation.

1. great peace (see Special Topic: Peace [*shalom*])
2. no cause for stumbling (BDB 506)

Another way to express this same truth is found in Pro. 3:1-12,13-26, using the imagery of a father's teaching and wisdom! Knowing and following God brings benefits in this life and the next!

Remember, the word "stumble" (BDB 506) is an idiom related to the concept of God's revelation as a clearly marked, smooth, straight, and obstruction-free, path (Ps. 119:105; Pro. 6:23).

119:166 The hope of this verse is paralleled by "long for" of Ps. 119:174. God's deliverance is future but certain! He will do what He promised (individually and corporately).

119:167 "keeps" Obedience is crucial both in the OT and the NT. The New Covenant (NT gospel) of Jer. 31:31-34 changed the mechanism but not the purpose. God wants a people to reflect His character to the nations that they may come to Him and be saved! See Special Topic: Keep.

The VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* PERFECT) is repeated in Ps. 119:168 for emphasis!

119:168b The same truth is the essence of Psalm 139. God fully knows the heart and mind of each of His special creations (i.e., humans, cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Kgs. 8:39; 1 Chr. 28:9; Ps. 7:9; 17:3; 66:10; Jer. 11:20; 17:10; 20:12; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 119:169-176 (*Tav*)

- ¹⁶⁹Let my cry come before You, O LORD;
Give me understanding according to Your word.
- ¹⁷⁰Let my supplication come before You;
Deliver me according to Your word.
- ¹⁷¹Let my lips utter praise,
For You teach me Your statutes.
- ¹⁷²Let my tongue sing of Your word,
For all Your commandments are righteousness.
- ¹⁷³Let Your hand be ready to help me,
For I have chosen Your precepts.
- ¹⁷⁴I long for Your salvation, O LORD,
And Your law is my delight.
- ¹⁷⁵Let my soul live that it may praise You,
And let Your ordinances help me.
- ¹⁷⁶I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant,
For I do not forget Your commandments.

119:169-176 This last strophe is characterized by JUSSIVES, three of them are followed by IMPERATIVES (Ps. 119:169,170,176).

1. let my cry come before You, Ps. 119:169a – BDB 897, KB 1132, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. give me understanding, Ps. 119:169b – BDB 106, KB 122, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. let my supplication come before You, Ps. 119:170a – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense; note the parallel between Ps. 119:169 and 170a

4. deliver me, Ps. 119:170b – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
5. let my lips utter praise, Ps. 119:171a – BDB 615, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
6. let my tongue sing, Ps. 119:172a – BDB 777, KB 854, *Qal* JUSSIVE
7. let my hand be ready to help, Ps. 119:173a – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE
8. let my soul live, Ps. 119:175a – BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* JUSSIVE
9. that it may praise You, Ps. 119:175a – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
10. let Your ordinances help me, Ps. 119:175b – BDB 740, KB 810, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
11. seek Your servant, Ps. 119:176a – BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

The Psalm concludes with a plethora of prayer requests!

119:171-173 Notice how the second line of each verse explains the reason for the request.

119:176a This imagery of God’s people as wayward sheep is also found in Isa. 53:6; Jer. 50:6; Ezek. 34:2-19; Zech. 10:2-3. This is where the imagery of

1. God as Shepherd – Psalm 23; Ezekiel 34
2. Messiah as Shepherd – Zechariah 10-11; John 10:1-18

is grounded. Sheep need constant, personal, protective care!

The IMPERATIVE of Ps. 119:176b reminds one of Matt. 18:12-14 and Luke 15:4-7. God does “seek” lost sheep! Hallelujah!

PSALM 120

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Deliverance from the Treacherous <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents	Plea for Relief from Bitter Foes	An Exile's Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer for Help	The Enemies of Peace
120:1-4	120:1-2 120:3-4	120:1-2 120:3-4	120:1-2 120:3-4	120:1-2 120:3-4
120:5-7	120:5-7	120:5-7	120:5-7	120:5 120:6-7

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 120:1-4

¹In my trouble I cried to the LORD,
And He answered me.

²Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips,
From a deceitful tongue.

³What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you,
You deceitful tongue?

⁴Sharp arrows of the warrior,
With the *burning* coals of the broom tree.

120:1 “In my trouble” Exactly what trouble (BDB 865 I, FEMININE NOUN) is not stated but it is somehow related to

1. lying lips, Ps. 120:2a
2. deceitful tongue, Ps. 120:2b,3b

The etymological root of the related VERB (BDB 864) denotes that which binds or restrains. Used metaphorically of something narrow, tight, or in a constricted place. The same root is used of an adversary or foe (BDB 865 III).

This concept of “restriction” is opposite of the Hebrew imagery of spaciousness, openness, and freedom.

▣ **“I cried to the LORD”** In times of distress faithful followers turn to YHWH in prayer and He hears (the VERBS denote a past event). See Special Topic: Effective Prayer.

The name for Deity is YHWH, the covenant name for Israel’s God. See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

120:2 “Deliver my soul” The VERB (BDB 664, KB 717) is a *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE. It denotes an intense prayer. The basic meaning of this root in the *Hiphil* is to “snatch away,” like prey from a predator’s mouth.

The term “soul” (BDB 659) is *nephesh*, which denotes a life force. See full note online at Gen. 35:18.

▣ **“lying lips. . .deceitful tongue”** These are in a Hebrew synonymous parallel relationship. See Special Topic: Hebrew Poetry.

120:3 The psalmist addresses his opponents directly. He asserts that YHWH will give them what they deserve (AB, p. 196; UBS *Handbook*, p. 1048).

120:4 The imagery of Ps. 120:4 is the answer to the question of Ps. 120:3. This is how YHWH will respond to these “lying tongues” (cf. Ps. 7:13).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 120:5-7

⁵Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech,
For I dwell among the tents of Kedar!
⁶Too long has my soul had its dwelling
With those who hate peace.
⁷I am *for* peace, but when I speak,
They are for war.

120:5 “Meshech. . .Kedar” These seem to be examples of exploitation (cf. Ezek. 27:13,21). Possibly the psalmist is attributing to his opponents the violent, sinful qualities of these national groups.

The other option is to see these as geographical opposites, one to the far north, the other to the south. If so, then it is imagery of

1. “deliver me far from these hateful people”
2. “please let me not be so far from the temple”

120:6-7 This hints at the psalmist’s attackers as being political enemies who want military conflict.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. Who is attacking the psalmist?
2. Explain the imagery of Ps. 120:4.
3. Why are two ethnic groups mentioned in Ps. 120:5?
4. How do Ps. 120:6 and 7 explain or define the possible historical setting?

PSALM 121

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD the Keeper of Israel <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents	God the Help of Those Who Seek Him	A Liturgy of Blessing	The LORD Our Protector	The Guardian of Israel
121:1-4	121:1-2 121:3-4	121:1-2 121:3-4	121:1-2 121:3 121:4-6	121:1-2 121:3-4
121:5-8	121:5-6 121:7-8	121:5-6 121:7-8	121:7-8	121:5-6 121:7-8

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 121:1-4

¹I will lift up my eyes to the mountains;

From where shall my help come?

²My help *comes* from the LORD,

Who made heaven and earth.

³He will not allow your foot to slip;

He who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴Behold, He who keeps Israel

Will neither slumber nor sleep.

121:1-8 All of the VERBS are IMPERFECTS. They denote ongoing and continual Divine care and protection.

There is a possibility, depending on how many speakers there are in this Psalm, that in Ps. 121:3 the IMPERFECTS are used in a JUSSIVE sense (i.e., prayer requests, NJB, NET).

121:1 “I will lift up my eyes” This is imagery denoting how a person trusts (cf. Ps. 123:1; 141:8).

▣ **“to the mountains”** Notice it is PLURAL, which may denote

1. creation, cf. Ps. 87:1
2. the temple on Mt. Moriah (i.e., PLURAL OF MAJESTY, see Special Topic: Moriah)
3. imagery of strength, stability, and longevity
4. protection (cf. Ps. 125:1-2)
5. if the MT intro., “songs of ascent” means pilgrim songs on the way to Jerusalem, then to see the hills of Judah meant they were close to the temple
6. it is possible it was meant to be a contrast to *Ba'al* worship done on the high places (cf. 2 Kgs. 23:4-14). Some looked to the fertility gods but the faithful followers looked to YHWH alone. See Special Topic: Monotheism.

▣ **“From where shall my help come”** Psalm 121:2 makes it obvious that the help is not a physical mountain but the God of creation (cf. Ps. 121:2) and covenant (cf. Ps. 121:4).

121:2 “the LORD” This is the covenant name for Deity—YHWH. See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

▣ **“Who made heaven and earth”** This refers to the physical creation of this planet (cf. Ps. 102:25; 115:15; 124:8; 134:3; 146:6). This is an allusion to Genesis 1.

Notice how YHWH is characterized.

1. Creator, Ps. 121:2
2. Sustainer, Ps. 121:3a,51
 - a. individual, cf. Ps. 121:7b,8
 - b. corporate, cf. Ps. 121:4
3. vigilant observer, Ps. 121:3b
4. shade, Ps. 121:5-6 (see Special Topic: Shadow As a Metaphor for Protection and Care)
5. perpetual keeping (the VERB, BDB 1036, KB 1581, is used in Ps. 121:3,4,5,7 [twice], and 8).

121:3 “foot to slip” This is common Hebrew imagery which

1. speaks of a godly life as a clear, straight, level road/path/way (cf. Ps. 139:24)
2. speaks of evil as a deviation from the clearly marked (i.e., revelation) path of God or a stumbling on the path

▣ **“will not slumber”** God is always watching

1. His creation
2. His people

Not like *Ba'al*, who sleeps, cf. 1 Kgs. 18:27; Ezek. 6:13; 18:6,12,15. It is possible “sleep” was a metaphor for YHWH’s inactivity (cf. Ps. 7:6; 44:23; 73:20; 78:65). However, in His time He does act for His people.

Psalm 121:4 repeats this same truth in a corporate sense. God has a plan for Israel. See Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 121:5-8

⁵**The LORD is your keeper;**

The LORD is your shade on your right hand.

⁶**The sun will not smite you by day,**

Nor the moon by night.

⁷**The LORD will protect you from all evil;**

He will keep your soul.

⁸**The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in**

From this time forth and forever.

121:6 This is imagery for

1. military attack
2. demonic attack (see Special Topic: The Demonic in the OT)

Notice the phrase “protect/keep from all evil” in Ps. 121:7a. It is surely possible that this phrase is a Hebrew idiom for all problems.

121:7 “He will keep your soul” What a wonderful promise of individual care and protection! He is “with” and “for” faithful followers. We are not alone and our life has purpose!

121:8a This is Hebrew imagery for God’s watchful care over all of the life of His faithful followers (cf. Deut. 28:6; 139:1-6).

Notice the typical Hebrew way of using two opposites as a way to include all.

1. heaven – earth, Ps. 121:2
2. sun – moon, Ps. 121:6
3. in – out, Ps. 121:8

121:8b There is surely an element of eternity in this verse, as there is in Ps. 23:6. The afterlife is veiled in the OT but the progressive revelation of the NT clarifies the truth!

▣ **“forever”** See Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*).

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1. To what mountain or mountains does Ps. 121:1 refer?
2. Why is God as creator mentioned in this Psalm?
3. Explain the OT imagery of Ps. 121:3a.
4. Why is Israel brought into this Psalm in Ps. 121:4? How does the corporate aspect of protection and care apply?
5. Explain the imagery of “shade” in Ps. 121:5b
6. To what does “all evil” of Ps. 121:7a refer?
7. Is there a reference to the afterlife in Ps. 121:8b?

PSALM 122

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents, of David	The Joy of Going to the House of the LORD	A Song Praising Zion as the Pilgrim's Goal	In Praise of Jerusalem	Hail, Jerusalem
122:1-5	122:1-2 122:3-5	122:1-2 122:3-5	122:1-2 122:3-5	122:1-2 122:3-5
122:6-9	122:6-9	122:6-9	122:6-9	133:6-7 122:8-9

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 122:1-5

- ¹I was glad when they said to me,
 "Let us go to the house of the LORD."
²Our feet are standing
 Within your gates, O Jerusalem,
³Jerusalem, that is built
 As a city that is compact together;
⁴To which the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD—
 An ordinance for Israel—
 To give thanks to the name of the LORD.
⁵For there thrones were set for judgment,

The thrones of the house of David.

122:1 “they said to me” This Psalm describes a pilgrimage to the temple, probably on an annual feast day (cf. Ps. 122:4; Leviticus 23) or special called event.

The “they” would refer to

1. fellow pilgrims already on the road to Jerusalem
2. local Levites welcoming the pilgrims to Jerusalem
3. liturgical imagery

Jerusalem was the “special place” of God’s dwelling during the United Monarchy and Divided Monarchy. After the Babylonian exile and the Jews were allowed to return (i.e., the decree of Cyrus, 538 B.C.), it became even more precious to the restored Israelites.

122:2 The imagery of “feet” or “walking” is part of the theological language of a godly life. God’s will was a clearly revealed path. The ultimate goal was arriving in the presence of God at the temple. This also functioned for the end-of-life fellowship with God (cf. Job 14:13-17; Ps. 23:4-6).

▣ **“Jerusalem”** See Special Topic: Moriah, Salem, Jebus, Jerusalem, Zion.

122:3 This is an unusual verse. It is difficult to know exactly what is being affirmed or praised. The VERB (BDB 287, KB 287, *Pual* PERFECT) basically is used of joining things. In the *Pual* it denotes

1. curtains of the tabernacle – Exod. 28:7
2. post-exilic Jerusalem’s rapidly built wall – Neh. 4:6
3. allies – Ps. 94:20
4. people living together – Eccl. 9:4

Here it seems to denote a well-designed and well-connected city plan.

122:4 In Deuteronomy Moses instructs Israel to go to a specific place to worship YHWH (e.g., Deut. 16:16). This verse alludes to these annual worship gatherings (cf. Leviticus 23).



NASB “ordinance”

NKJV, LXX,

Peshitta “testimony”

NRSV “was decreed”

TEV “command”

NJB “a sign”

JPSOA “was enjoined”

REB “the duty”

This FEMININE NOUN (BDB 730) is usually translated “testimony.” See Special Topic: Terms Used for God’s Revelation.

It is interesting that the DSS manuscript has “the community of Israel” instead of the NOUN PHRASE. Some translators have assumed that Ps. 122:3b also refers to a community of “united peoples.”

▣ **“Israel”** See Special Topic: Israel (the name).

▣ **“To give thanks”** This refers to

1. liturgy
2. offering (sacrifice)

▣ **“the name of the LORD”** See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

In Psalm 122:4c the full covenant name—YHWH (BDB 217) is used, but the abbreviation—YH (BDB 219) is used in 122:4a.

122:5 The “throne” represented

1. legal decisions – Deut. 17:8
2. kingship – Ps. 89:4,29,36; 132:12

God’s promise to David about his descendants is found in 2 Samuel 7 and the Messianic aspect in Isaiah 9; 11; Micah 5. See Special Topic: Messiah.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 122:6-9

⁶Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:

“May they prosper who love you.

**⁷May peace be within your walls,
And prosperity within your palaces.”**

**⁸For the sake of my brothers and my friends,
I will now say, “May peace be within you.”**

**⁹For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
I will seek your good.**

122:6-9 This strophe denotes a call to prayer.

1. *Qal* IMPERATIVE – Ps. 122:6a
2. two JUSSIVES – Ps. 122:6b,7a
3. two COHORTATIVES – Ps. 122:8b,9b

Because Jerusalem was the capital of David’s Kingdom and the permanent site of the temple, it had a special place of emphasis in the OT.

However, I think the NT has universalized the national promises to Israel to include all humanity. The focus of biblical faith is no longer the temple in Jerusalem but the new and superior temple in Jesus (see the book of Hebrews). Neither Jesus or any Apostle ever reaffirms the national, geographical promises to Israel. I know this is different from what you read/hear from many authors/preachers, seminaries. Please check the following Special Topics before you reject this theological assertion.

1. Special Topic: Why Do OT Covenant Promises Seem so Different From NT Covenant Promises?
2. Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan

122:6 “peace” The term (see Special Topic: Peace [*shalom*]), “peace” (BDB 1022) forms part of the name “Jerusalem.” Remember the site of the temple was Mt. Moriah (cf. Genesis 22). In Genesis 14 it is called “Salem.” These word plays are not so much etymological as sound plays in Hebrew, but the words are not Hebrew.

Notice the number of sound plays in Ps. 122:6.

1. pray – שָׁאַל (BDB 981, KB 1371)
2. peace – שָׁלוֹם (BDB 1022)
3. Jerusalem – יְרוּשָׁלַם (BDB 436)
4. prosper – שָׁלַח (BDB 1017, KB 1503)

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1. To which period of Israel's history does this Psalm relate?
2. How is Ps. 122:5 related to 2 Samuel 7?
3. Should Christians still pray for Jerusalem's peace and prosperity?

PSALM 123

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for the LORD's Help <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents	Prayer for Relief From Contempt	Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer for Mercy	Prayer in Distress
123:1-2	123:1-2	123:1-2	123:1-2	123:1-2b 123:2c-f
123:3-4	123:3-4	123:3-4	123:3-4	123:3-4b 123:4c

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 123:1-2

¹**To You I lift up my eyes,**
O You who are enthroned in the heavens!
²**Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* to the hand of their master,**
As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,
So our eyes *look* to the LORD our God,
Until He is gracious to us.

123:1 This is similar to Ps. 121:1 (lifting up one's eyes was a gesture of prayer). In Ps. 121:2 "heaven" referred to the atmosphere above the earth (cf. Gen. 1:1), but here to the throne of God (cf. Ps. 11:4; 103:19; Isa. 66:1). See Special Topics

1. Special Topic: Heaven
2. Special Topic: The Heavens and the Third Heaven

As is so common in the Psalter, there is a fluidity between the individual and the corporate. This Psalm starts out with “I” but moves rapidly toward “us.”

123:2 The word “hand” (BDB 388, see Special Topic: Hand) is an idiom of power over (i.e., master, mistress). YHWH is the ultimate source of power and lordship. His people look to Him.

▣ **“the LORD our God”** This is similar to the title first used in Gen. 2:4, which combines YHWH and *Elohim*. *Eloh* is probably the SINGULAR form. This double title combines two characteristics of Israel’s God.

1. creator, sustainer, provider of all life on this planet – *Elohim*
2. savior, covenant-making God – YHWH

See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

▣ **“Until He is gracious to us”** The psalmist’s situation is described in Ps. 123:3-4. He is patient that God will act on his behalf (*Qal* IMPERFECT). He calls on God in prayer twice in Ps. 123:3 (two *Qal* IMPERATIVES) to act on his behalf in compassion and mercy (BDB 335, KB 334).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 123:3-4

³**Be gracious to us, O LORD, be gracious to us,
For we are greatly filled with contempt.**
⁴**Our soul is greatly filled
With the scoffing of those who are at ease,
And with the contempt of the proud.**

123:3b-4 As so often in the Psalter the author feels attacked (here he expresses the corporate aspect also). Here it is wealthy, powerful fellow Israelites (i.e., Isa. 32:11; Amos 6:1). Their actions fill him with “contempt” (BDB 100) and “scoffing” (BDB 541). It is surely possible that Psalms 122 and 123 reflect the period of Ezra, Nehemiah. Often these kinds of people act as if they are the masters but the psalmist knows YHWH is the true and ultimate master. Life is often unfair and demands patient prayer and a proper worldview!

The UBS *Handbook* (p. 1059) asserts that “the language of verses 3-4 implies that the enemies are foreigners, not fellow Israelites.” But I see nothing in Ps. 123:3-4 that proves this, and the problems of post-exilic Jerusalem fit this context better.

PSALM 124

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Rescue from Enemies <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents, of David	The LORD the Defense of His People	Thanksgiving for a National Deliverance	God the Protector of His People	The Savior of Israel
124:1-5	124:1-5	124:1-5	124:1 124:2-5	124:1-3 124:4-5
124:6-8	124:6-8	124:6-7 124:8	124:6-8	124:6-7 124:8

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3. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 124:1-5

¹“Had it not been the LORD who was on our side,”

Let Israel now say,

²“Had it not been the LORD who was on our side

When men rose up against us,

³Then they would have swallowed us alive,

When their anger was kindled against us;

⁴Then the waters would have engulfed us,

The stream would have swept over our soul;

⁵Then the raging waters would have swept over our soul.”

124:1-5 This is a liturgical strophe related to the deliverance of national Israel from a foreign invader. The exact historical setting is not stated.

The psalmist uses powerful imagery to convey YHWH's deliverance.

1. He is on their side, Ps. 124:2
2. the enemy would have swallowed Israel, Ps. 124:3a
3. the enemy had their anger kindled against Israel, Ps. 124:3b
4. the enemy, like a flood, would have engulfed Israel, Ps. 124:4-5

124:1 "Let Israel now say" This is a *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. The response would have been quoted at a national victory celebration (cf. Ps. 129:1).

124:3a This imagery of "swallowing" (BDB 118, KB 134) comes from

1. the personification of the earth (i.e., death, *Sheol* cf. Exod. 15:12) swallowing the rebellious Levites during the wilderness wandering period (cf. Num. 16:30,32; Deut. 11:6)
2. the attack of a predatory animal (cf. Ps. 35:25; Pro. 1:12; Amos 2:16); this is stated specifically in Ps. 124:6b

124:3b The imagery of anger as burning is first used in Gen. 39:19. Fire is used often as a means of

1. judgment
2. anger
3. cleansing

See Special Topic: Fire.

124:4-5 The imagery of water/flood as life problems is recurrent in the OT (i.e., Job 22:11; 38:34; Ps. 32:6; 66:12; 69:2; 144:7; Isa. 43:2; Lam. 3:54). It is used of an invasion in Isa. 8:7-8 and Jer. 51:34, as it is in this Psalm. As flood waters cover the land, so do invading armies. The other common metaphor for this was a locust infestation (i.e., Joel).

Whenever water is seen as an enemy of humanity, there may be an allusion to YHWH's defeat of watery chaos (cf. Ps. 29:3,10; 74:12-17; 89:9-10; 93:3-4). This theme is part of YHWH as creator (cf. Ps. 124:8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 124:6-8

⁶Blessed be the LORD,

Who has not given us to be torn by their teeth.

⁷Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the trapper;

The snare is broken and we have escaped.

⁸Our help is in the name of the LORD,

Who made heaven and earth.

124:6-8 YHWH is blessed (BDB 138, KB 159, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) for His deliverance of national Israel. The deliverance is characterized as

1. escape from a predatory animal (i.e., Ps. 7:2)
2. escape from a bird hunter/trapper (cf. Ps. 91:3; 119:110; Pro. 6:5)

124:7b One wonders if this line of poetry is meant to convey the destruction of the invading army.

124:8a The name stands for the person. See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

124:8b This is a set phrase (cf. Ps. 102:25; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 146:6) asserting the uniqueness of Israel’s God. See Special Topic: Monotheism.

PSALM 125

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD Surrounds His People <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents, of David	The LORD, the Strength of His People	Prayer for Deliverance from National Enemies (A Lament)	The Security of God's People	God Protects His Faithful
125:1-3	125:1-2 125:3	125:1-5	125:1-2 125:3-5b	125:1-2 125:3
125:4-5	125:4 125:5a-c 125:5d		125:5c	125:4 125:5a-b 125:5c

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2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 125:1-3

¹Those who trust in the LORD

Are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever.

²As the mountains surround Jerusalem,

So the LORD surrounds His people

From this time forth and forever.

³For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the righteous,

So that the righteous will not put forth their hands to do wrong.

125:1a “Those who trust in the LORD” This is the key condition of biblical faith. The concept is recurrent in the Psalter (BDB 105, KB 120, cf. Ps. 9:10; 21:7; 22:4-5; 25:2; 26:1; 28:7; 32:10; 37:3; 40:4; 55:23; 56:4,11; 62:8; 84:12; 91:2; 112:7; 115:9,10,11; 125:1; 143:8). Often the same concept is expressed as

1. trust in the name – Ps. 33:21
2. trust in the mercy – Ps. 13:5; 52:8
3. trust in the word – Ps. 119:42
4. trust in the salvation – Ps. 78:22

The theologically related word for trust (BDB 52) is explained in the Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT. The Greek counterpoint is explained in the Special Topic: Faith, Believe, Trust in the NT.

I have come to believe there are several basic elements to a true and mature biblical faith/trust.

1. repentance (see Special Topic: Repentance in the OT)
2. faith/trust/believe
3. obedience (see Special Topic: Keep)
4. perseverance (see Special Topic: Perseverance)

125:1b To see the full theological note and two Special Topics about these promises to national Israel, see my note at Ps. 122:6-9.

The LXX makes this line of poetry refer to YHWH (i.e., “he who inhabits Jerusalem will never be shaken”). Apparently this comes from the title of YHWH in Ps. 9:11.

125:2 The imagery of “mountains” is used in several senses (see note at Ps. 121:1). Here it refers to the protection they provide from invaders. YHWH is the shield and protector of His people!

▣ **“forever”** The term (BDB 761) is used in Ps. 125:1 and 2. It has several connotations related to covenant fidelity. See Special Topic: Forever (‘*olam*).

125:3 “the scepter” This (BDB 986) is a metaphor for kingship (i.e., YHWH as King, cf. Ps. 45:6). It is first used in a Messianic sense in Gen. 49:10 of a future Judean, Davidic (cf. 2 Samuel 7) king. Here of the promise that no (1) foreign king or (2) idolatrous Judean king shall reign over God’s people. It is obvious this promise is conditional (i.e., Ps. 125:3b,4).

The time frame of Ps. 125:3 is uncertain.

1. the enemy now controls Israel (present)
2. the enemy did control Israel (past)
3. the enemy will never control Israel (future)

▣ **“of wickedness”** This could refer to

1. a foreign pagan ruler
2. an idolatrous Israelite ruler

It denotes one who deviates from YHWH’s covenant requirements.

▣

NASB	“shall not rest upon the land”
NRSV, JPSOA,	
REB	“the land allotted”
TEV	“will not always rule over the land”
NJB	“will not come to rest over the heritage”
LXX	“over the allotment”

The Hebrew has a PREPOSITION and a NOUN (BDB 174), which denotes an inheritance. The imagery comes from Joshua's (i.e., Joshua 12-19) account of the Divinely-guided division of the land of Canaan to the Hebrew tribes by casting lots (cf. Ps. 16:5).

▣ **“the righteous”** See Special Topic: Righteousness.

▣ **“hands”** See Special Topic: Hand.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 125:4-5

⁴Do good, O LORD, to those who are good

And to those who are upright in their hearts.

⁵But as for those who turn aside to their crooked ways,

The LORD will lead them away with the doers of iniquity.

Peace be upon Israel.

125:4 “Do good” This is a *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (BDB 405, KB 408). God is “good” (BDB 373 II, cf. Ps. 86:5; 100:5; 106:1) and His people should reflect Him (cf. Deut. 8:16).

Both Hebrew words for “good” are used in this verse.

125:5 Notice how Ps. 125:4-5 characterizes two kinds of people (“to those who. . .”). This is known as “the two ways” (cf. Deut. 30:15,19; Ps. 1:1). One’s relationship with God can be seen by the way he/she lives life (cf. Matt. 7:15-23)! Eternal life has observable characteristics!

▣ **“crooked ways”** A crooked way (BDB 785) is the exact opposite of the righteous way (cf. Ps. 5:8; 139:24; 143:10).

Notice the parallel ways of describing people.

1. “those who are good”
2. “those who are upright in heart”
3. “those who turn aside to their crooked ways”
4. “the doers of iniquity”

▣ **“Peace be upon Israel”** Peace can be upon only a believing, faithful, righteous Israel. In the NT this refers to followers of Jesus Christ (cf. Gal. 6:16). Also note Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6; Gal. 3:7,29; Phil. 3:3! The OT must be interpreted through the fuller revelation of Jesus and the NT!

The God of Peace and the Prince of Peace desire peace for those who trust them! See Special Topic: Peace (*shalom*).

PSALM 126

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Thanksgiving for Return from Captivity <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents.	A Joyful Return to Zion	A Prayer for Deliverance From National Misfortune	A Prayer for Deliverance	Song of Returning Exiles
126:1-3	126:1-3	126:1-3	126:1-3	126:1-2b 126:2c-3
126:4-6	126:4 126:5-6	126:4 126:5-6	126:4-5 126:6	126:4-5 126:6

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 126:1-3

¹When the LORD brought back the captive ones of Zion,
We were like those who dream.

²Then our mouth was filled with laughter
And our tongue with joyful shouting;
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”

³The LORD has done great things for us;
We are glad.

126:1-3 This strophe contrasts the Israelites' feelings about being taken captive into exile with the great joy of returning to Judah and Jerusalem and the temple.

The problem for interpreters is that the Hebrew VERBS do not carry a time element, only context can determine past, present, or future! Therefore, this first verse could be

1. an affirmation of a past act
2. a hope for a future act
3. a past act, Ps. 126:1; a prayer for YHWH to do it again, Ps. 126:4

126:1 “brought back” This VERBAL (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) has a wide semantic field. It is the normal word used for “repentance” (see Special Topic: Repentance in the OT) from the basic meaning “to turn” or “to return.” It is the second connotation that seems to be involved in Ps. 126:1 (JPSOA, based on Ps. 85:1, has “restore,” also see Ps. 14:7; 53:6).

Since several of the “Psalms of Ascent” reflect the Ezra/Nehemiah period (i.e., Cyrus' decree of 538 B.C.), this Psalm may also reflect that post-exilic period.

Just a theological note, their freedom from captivity/exile must have been preceded by their first turning back to YHWH.

▣ **“the captive ones”** There is a possible emendation (here and in Ps. 126:4) followed by the JPSOA, “When YHWH restores the fortunes of Zion”).

1. brought back – שִׁיבָה (BDB 1000 II), MT
2. restore – שָׁבוּרָה (BDB 986), JPSOA, cf. Ps. 85:1

The term “fortunes” would denote prosperity (TEV footnote). It would be the visible sign of a restored covenant with YHWH and its promised blessings (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30).

▣ **“Zion”** See Special Topic: Zion.

▣ **“We were like those who dream”** This is the first of several descriptive phrases expressing the joy of those who returned.

1. Ps. 126:1b
2. Ps. 126:2a
3. Ps. 126:2b
4. Ps. 126:2c-d
5. Ps. 126:3

These feelings were the intended outcome of a relationship with YHWH.

The DSS and the LXX see the Hebrew word “dream,” חָלַם (BDB 321 II) as referring to “be healthy,” “strong” (cf. REB); the root is spelled exactly the same. The Peshitta has “we were like those who rejoice.”

126:2c-d “they said among the nations” This phrase reaffirms the central theological assertion that YHWH wanted to use His relationship with Israel as a way to reach the nations (cf. Ps. 46:10). See Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 126:4-6

⁴Restore our captivity, O LORD,

As the streams in the South.

⁵Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting.

⁶He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying *his* bag of seed,

Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves *with him*.

126:4a This IMPERATIVE (like the INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT of Ps. 126:1a) is difficult to understand. If Ps. 126:1 asserts the return of the captives, why is Ps. 126:4 a prayer for their return? This is why JPSOA uses the model of Ps. 85:1 to assert that it is referring to the return of prosperity.

126:4b This is a geographical metaphor related to water channels in the desert (i.e., Negev) called wadis. These being filled with water was imagery of a great blessing of future agricultural abundance (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30).

126:5-6 The promise of abundant water in Ps. 126:4b is extended to other agricultural idioms. The “tears” (BDB 199) would refer to

1. tears of joy at the restoration of the covenant (i.e., Israel back in the land flowing with milk and honey)
2. the results of Israel’s repentance

126:6 There are two examples of a grammatical form of intensification in this verse. Twice the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of one Hebrew root are used.

1. he who goes to and fro – BDB 229, KB 246
2. shall indeed come again – BDB 9, KB 112

Those who plant in faith/repentance will reap in certainty (cf. Deut. 30:1-10)!



NASB	“bag of seed”
NKJV, NRSV	“bearing seed”
REV, NJB,	
LXX	“carrying the seed”
JPSOA	“seed-bag”

This word (BDB 604 I) is used in Job 28:18 in the sense of “drawing up” and here possibly in the sense of a bag with draw strings. The VERB form means to “drag” or “draw” (cf. Amos 9:13).

The Tyndale OT Commentary Series (vol. 16, p. 476) says the VERB refers to a trail (i.e., drawing out) of seed (i.e., one row at a time, not sowing broadly).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is it difficult to know the historical setting of this Psalm?
2. How does Ps. 126:1 seem to contradict Ps. 126:4?
3. What is the theological implication of Ps. 126:2c-d?
4. Define “Negev.”
5. What does the “weeping” of Ps. 126:5 imply?

PSALM 127

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prosperity Comes from the LORD <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents, of Solomon	Laboring and Prospering with the LORD	A Safe Home and A Large Family Are the LORD'S Gifts (Wisdom Psalm)	In Praise of God's Goodness	Trust in Providence
127:1-2	127:1-2	127:1-2	127:1-2	127:1 127:2
127:3-5	127:3-5	127:3-5	127:3-5	127:3-4 127:5

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 127:1-2

¹Unless the LORD builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it;
Unless the LORD guards the city,
The watchman keeps awake in vain.
²It is vain for you to rise up early,
To retire late,
To eat the bread of painful labors;
For He gives to His beloved *even in his sleep*.

127:1-2 This strophe asserts the sovereignty of YHWH. What He desires is secure! YHWH had a theological, global purpose for Israel. See Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan.

The term “house” (Ps. 127:1) and “His beloved” (Ps. 127:2) are metaphors for the nation of Israel, which developed from YHWH’s special promises to the Patriarchs (both a land and a seed, i.e., Genesis 12:1-3).

Notice the parallel between “unless the LORD builds the house”. . . “unless the LORD guards the city.” This strophe is built on

1. parallelism
2. sound plays (ש)
 - a. “in vain,” Ps. 127:1 (twice), 2 – BDB 996 (see Special Topic: Vain, Empty, Nothingness)
 - b. guards, Ps. 127:1 – BDB 1036
 - c. watchman, Ps. 127:1 – BDB 1036
 - d. keeps awake, Ps. 127:1 – BDB 1052
 - e. to rise up early, Ps. 127:2 – BDB 1014
 - f. retire late, Ps. 127:2 – BDB 442, יָשַׁב
 - g. sleep, Ps. 127:2 – BDB 446, שָׁנָא, which occurs only here in the OT (AB, p. 225, suggests this could be the Syrian or Ethiopian word for “prosperity,” that would fit this context, however, “sleep” also fits the context well)

127:2 Human efforts without God are useless, ineffective, and temporary (cf. John 15:5).

There are three PARTICIPLES and two INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS that form parallel phrases.

1. to rise up early
2. to retire late
3. to eat the bread of painful labors

It is interesting that AB (p. 223) sees #3 as a reference to idolatry and cites (1) Jerome’s notes (Juxta Helraeos) as a support and (2) Ps. 106:36,37 and possibly Ps. 139:24, which are from the same basic root (BDB 780 I and BDB 781). However, the idea of painful labor seems to be a better parallel to #1 and #2 of strenuous human effort to bring about a desired result.

▣ **“His beloved”** This refers to Israel (cf. Deut. 33:12; Ps. 60:5; 108:6; Isa. 5:1; Jer. 11:14; 12:7). Because the MT and DSS introductions have “Solomon,” some scholars have made a connection with 2 Sam. 12:25, where Solomon is called “Jedidiah” (i.e., beloved of *Yah*) by Nathan.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 127:3-5

- ³**Behold, children are a gift of the LORD,
The fruit of the womb is a reward.**
- ⁴**Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So are the children of one’s youth.**
- ⁵**How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them;
They will not be ashamed
When they speak with their enemies in the gate.**

127:3-5 This strophe at first seems unrelated to Ps. 127:1-2, but the thrust of the Psalm as a whole is God’s active involvement in the life of the nation of Israel. This Psalm is addressed to the current king. A nation is only as strong as its family structure.

Healthy children are part of the “blessing” section of both Lev. 26:9 and Deut. 7:13; 28:4; 30:5. It was a sign of a healthy covenant relationship with God. Remember He is the One who commanded mankind to be “fruitful and multiply” (cf. Gen. 2:27-28; 9:1,7).

127:3

NASB, TEV,

REB “gift of the LORD”

NKJV, NRSV,

LXX “heritage from the LORD”

NJB “a birthright from Yahweh”

JPSOA “a provision of the LORD”

The word (BDB 635) basically means an inheritance (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 77) or “property,” “possession.”

1. inheritance of a person – Gen. 31:14; Num. 27:7,8,9,10,11; 36:3,8; Ps. 37:18
2. inheritance of Israel – Deut. 4:21; 15:4; 19:10; 20:16; 24:4; 25:19; 26:1; Isa. 54:17
3. lot or portion – Job 20:29; 27:13; 31:2

This Psalm can be interpreted as a stated truth to

1. an individual (#1 above)
2. to the king of Israel and, thereby the nation (#2 above)

I think #2 fits this Psalm best.

127:5 This line of poetry emphasizes a strong population (or tribal group) able to defend themselves because of

1. their God
2. their God-given population

It is possible this is a reference to the secure dynasty of the Davidic King (cf. 2 Samuel 7).

▣ **“They shall not be ashamed”** In this context of a dynastic promise to the King, I think “shame” refers to a military defeat. For “ashamed” see note at Ps. 119:6.

▣ **“in the gate”** This was the place of law, commerce, and social activities.

The AB (p. 224) offers another suggestion related to this last line of poetry. The basic Hebrew phrase can refer to a battle scenario where the enemy is defeated. The translation would be, “but shall drive back his foes from the gate.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. To whom is this Psalm addressed?
2. Who is “the beloved” of Ps. 127:2?
3. Define “ashamed” in this context.

4. The last line of the poem must be understood in light of who is addressed, why?

PSALM 128

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Blessedness of the Fear of the LORD <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents	Blessing of Those Who Fear the LORD	A Large and Prosperous Family Is A Reward for Devotion to the LORD (Wisdom Psalm)	The Reward of Obedience to the LORD	Blessings on the Faithful
128:1-4	128:1 128:2-4	128:1-4	128:1 128:2-4	128:1 128:2-3 128:4-6
128:5-6	128:5-6a 128:6b	128:5-6a 128:6b	128:5-6	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 128:1-4

¹How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,
Who walks in His ways.
²When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands,
You will be happy and it will be well with you.
³Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
Within your house,
Your children like olive plants
Around your table.

**⁴Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed
Who fears the LORD.**

128:1 “blessed” See note on this word (BDB 80) at Ps. 1:1. There are two major terms in Hebrew for the concept of “blessed” or “happy,” both relating to God and humans. Let me use Deuteronomy 33 as an example.

1. bless (see Special Topic: Blessing [OT])
 - a. NOUN – BDB 139, cf. Deut. 33:1,11
 - b. VERB – BDB 138, cf. Deut. 33:1,13,20,24
2. bless – BDB 80, used in Ps. 1:1 and 18 more times in Psalms but not in Genesis or Deuteronomy

YHWH’s blessings are directly related to those covered by His covenant. It is based on obedience (see Special Topic: Keep). This whole concept of prosperity and contentment is part of the OT’s “two ways,” seen in Psalm 1; Deut. 30:15,19 and described as “cursing” and “blessing” in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30.

The truly blessed person is the one who is rightly related to (1) God, (2) his/her family, and (3) the people of God. All three spheres must be in harmony!

▣ **“everyone”** Notice how this is limited.

1. those who fear the Lord, Ps. 128:3,4 (see Special Topic: Fear [OT])
2. those who walk in His ways (cf. Ps. 119:2-3)

So the blessing is not for “everyone,” not even for covenant people, but only for faithful followers!

This has implications on how Christians should view the modern state of Israel. Covenant obedience is a prerequisite to covenant promises!

▣ **“ways”** See Special Topic: Terms for God’s Revelation.

128:2-3 Notice the covenant promises for faithful followers (here, to one individual).

1. enjoy the fruit of their labors
2. be happy
3. good life
4. good home life
5. many, healthy children
6. a long life

This is the essence of OT blessings. YHWH wanted to get the attention of the nations by blessing Israel. Once they noticed, Israel was to share the source of their blessing and peace—YHWH.

It should be stated that abundant population growth was a command of God in

1. Gen. 1:28; 9:1,7
2. it was part of the promise to Abraham in Gen. 12:2; 13:16; 16:10
3. it was also the reality of the family of Jacob (cf. Gen. 28:14) in Egypt that caused the Egyptian leaders to fear and persecute Israel (Exodus 1-2).

128:2a Just a note to mention that this promise is the exact opposite of the threat of exile! The exiles were God’s judgment on faithless covenant followers. It was the very opposite of His intended purposes. It was the epitome of irony!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 128:5-6

⁵The LORD bless you from Zion,

And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

⁶Indeed, may you see your children's children.

Peace be upon Israel!

128:5-6 This is a closing prayer for both the individual faithful follower and national Israel (cf. Ps. 128:6b).

1. Ps. 128:5a – bless (BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense)
2. Ps. 128:5b – may you see. . . (BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE)
3. Ps. 128:6a – same as #2
4. Ps. 128:6b – no VERB but an assumed prayer (cf. Ps. 125:5)

It is interesting that Paul's allusion to the church in Gal. 6:16 uses similar phrasing to Ps. 128:6. Whether it is a direct, conscious allusion is uncertain.

☒ Notice that “the prosperity of Jerusalem” is parallel to “see your children's children.” This refers to long term peace, prosperity, and societal stability.

128:5 “from Zion” This refers to YHWH dwelling in the temple (cf. Ps. 123:4:3). See Special Topic: Zion.

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1. Define the Hebrew term “blessed” (Ps. 128:1a).
2. Define the Hebrew term “fear” (Ps. 128:1a).
3. Why is “many children” considered a blessing?
4. How are the categories of faith, home, and nation linked?

PSALM 129

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Prayer for the Overthrow of Zion's Enemies <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents	Song of Victory Over Zion's Enemies	Prayer for Deliverance From National Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer Against Israel's Enemies	Against Zion's Enemies
129:1-4	129:1-4	129:1-8	129:1-4	129:1-2 129:3-4
129:5-8	129:5-8		129:5-8	129:5-8b 129:8c

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is a national lament. For the use of "son" for Israel, see Special Topic: Son of God.
- B. The second stanza (Ps. 129:5-8) is a curse on Israel's persecutors, who apparently are foreigners.
- C. Many of the images referring to Israel's life and faith are drawn from agriculture. It is crucial that we remember the following truths when we interpret the Psalms.
 1. they are OT and not NT
 2. they relate to an ANE setting
 3. they focus on covenant obedience and the centrality of national Israel in the plan of God
 4. they must be reinterpreted in light of the NT gospel

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 129:1-4

¹“Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up,”

Let Israel now say,

²“Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up;

Yet they have not prevailed against me.

³The plowers plowed upon my back;

They lengthened their furrows.”

⁴The LORD is righteous;

He has cut in two the cords of the wicked.

129:1-2 Psalm 129:1, line 1 seems, at first, to address the situation of a faithful individual but the VERB of line 2 (BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) shows this is a national lament. This Psalm does not state why Israel is persecuted so often. Like most of the Psalms, the admission of sin of the covenant people is not expressed, but assumed. The terrible realities of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-28 have become a national reality.

129:2b The fact that national Israel remained in existence is a tribute to the mercy (cf. Malachi 1) and purpose of God (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan).

129:3 This is agricultural imagery denoting suffering and pain.

129:4a Israel remains because of their God. He is true to His character (see Special Topic: Righteousness) and purpose (cf. Gen. 3:15; Exod. 19:5-6; Isa. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-3).

129:4b This (“cords,” BDB 721) may refer to

1. the trapping of animals (cf. Ps. 140:5)
2. the bindings of a yoke of oxen (cf. Job 39:10)
3. the bindings of a prisoner

AB (p. 231) suggests that this line of poetry be understood as a JUSSIVE (as is Ps. 129:5-6), which would denote a prayer. If YHWH has already “cut” (BDB 893, KB 1125, *Piel* PERFECT), why the curses of Ps. 129:5-6? Dahood makes it a PRECATIVE PERFECT, which he notes is often found in parallel with JUSSIVES. If this is true, then Ps. 129:4 begins a new strophe (i.e., Ps. 129:4-8), therefore, a translation like “Let YHWH cut the cords (i.e., oxen plows) of the wicked.” Most English translations (NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB, JPSOA, REB) translate the VERB as a past event.

129:4-8 This strophe describes a curse on all who hate Zion (i.e., meaning YHWH and His people). In this context, Zion refers to national Israel with its center being the temple in Jerusalem.

1. be put to shame – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, Ps. 129:5
2. be turned back – BDB 690, KB 744, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, Ps. 129:6
3. let them be like grass upon the housetops – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, Ps. 129:6
 - a. it withers before it grows, Ps. 129:6b
 - b. the reaper has no fruit from it, Ps. 129:7
4. no one blesses them, Ps. 129:8

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 129:5-8

**⁵May all who hate Zion
Be put to shame and turned backward;
⁶Let them be like grass upon the housetops,
Which withers before it grows up;
⁷With which the reaper does not fill his hand,
Or the binder of sheaves his bosom;
⁸Nor do those who pass by say,
“The blessing of the LORD be upon you;
We bless you in the name of the LORD.”**

129:5b “put to shame” This term (BDB 101, KB 116) denotes someone out of fellowship with YHWH and under His judgment. It can be used of

1. foreigners
2. rebellious Israelites

It denotes the consequences of unfaithfulness or unbelief mentioned in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30 as becoming a reality (see NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 621-627). For “ashamed” see note at Ps. 119:6.

129:8a-b This may refer to the blessing that friends, family, and neighbors shouted to the harvesters (cf. Ruth 2:4).

129:8c See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Does the opening of this Psalm imply a liturgy?
2. Why is Israel called “a youth”?
3. To what does “cords” of Ps. 129:4 refer?
4. Define “shame.”
5. What is the possible historical setting of Ps. 129:8?

PSALM 130

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Hope in the LORD'S Forgiving Love <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents	Waiting for the Redemption of the LORD	A Prayer for Deliverance From Personal Trouble	A Prayer For Help	Out of the Depths
130:1-4	130:1-2 130:3-4	130:1-2 130:3-4	130:1-4	130:1-2 130:3-4
130:5-8	130:5-6 130:7-8	130:5-6 130:7-8	130:5-6 130:7-8	130:5-7a 130:7b-8

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is one of those Psalms that speaks to the deepest desires and hopes of faithful followers.
 1. there are problems, sins, and disappointments
 2. the believer cries out to his/her only hope, YHWH
 3. He hears and forgives
 4. He is faithful to His character and word even when humans are not (cf. Ps. 51:1)
- B. There are several names for Israel's Deity used in the Psalm.
 1. YHWH, Ps. 130:1,5,7 (twice)
 2. *Yah*, Ps. 130:3 (abbreviation of YHWH)
 3. *Adon*, Ps. 130:3,6

See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

- C. This Psalm expresses both individual and corporate yearning for restoration (cf. Ps. 130:7-8).
- D. Notice the grammatical theological emphasis of Ps. 130:7-8.
 - 1. Ps. 130:7, “abundant redemption” (BDB 915 I, KB 1176, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE)
 - 2. He (and He alone) will redeem – PERSONAL PRONOUN added to VERB for emphasis

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 130:1-4

¹Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD.
²LORD, hear my voice!
 Let Your ears be attentive
 To the voice of my supplications.
³If You, LORD, should mark iniquities,
 O LORD, who could stand?
⁴But there is forgiveness with You,
 That You may be feared.

130:1 “Out of the depths” This NOUN (BDB 771) has several figurative uses. It basically means “deep.”

- 1. distress described as a flood of waters, cf. Ps. 69:1-2, 14-15 (similar metaphor to Ps. 42:7a; 88:7)
- 2. YHWH as champion of watery chaos, cf. Isa. 51:9-10 (similar to Ps. 74:12-17; 89:9-10)
- 3. the defeat of Tyre’s sea power (i.e., sunk into the sea), cf. Ezek. 27:34
- 4. possibly a reference to *Sheol*, cf. Jonah 2:2-6; Ps. 18:4-5)

▣ **“I have cried to You”** The exact nature of the psalmist’s distress is not stated but it is related to his sense of sin (cf. Ps. 130:3-4). He feels alienated but knows God will forgive and restore a repentant, patient follower (cf. Ps. 130:5-6)!

130:2 This verse reflects the psalmist’s prayer mentioned in Ps. 130:1.

- 1. hear – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. let Your ears be attentive – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

130:3-4 Several English translations make these two verses a separate strophe (i.e., NKJV, NRSV, NJB).

The reality of the sinfulness of all humans after the Fall of Genesis 3 is a recurrent truth throughout the Bible.

- 1. Genesis 3:17-19; 6:5, 11-12; 8:21
- 2. 1 Kings 8:46
- 3. 2 Chronicles 6:36
- 4. Ezra 9:15
- 5. Job 4:17; 9:2; 15:14-16; 25:4
- 6. Psalm 51:5; 76:7; 130:3; 143:2
- 7. Proverbs 20:9
- 8. Ecclesiastes 7:20
- 9. Isaiah 53:6
- 10. Nahum 1:6
- 11. Malachi 3:2

12. Romans 3:9-18,19,23; 11:32
13. 1 John 1:8-10
14. Revelation 6:17

All need forgiveness! Humans do not sense a need for forgiveness until the Spirit clearly reveals our need. There is no need for a savior until there is a sense of lostness! See Special Topic: Forgiveness in the OT. Forgiveness is possible because of

1. the gracious, unchanging character of God (see Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel's God [OT])
2. the finished work of the Messiah (cf. Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21)
3. the drawing, wooing of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65; 16:8-15)

130:3 “mark” This VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT) denotes, in this context, the preserving of a record. This is reflected in the “two books” of God (i.e., book of deeds/remembrances and the book of life, see Special Topic: The Two Books of God). This is a metaphor for the memory of God.

It is ironic but God is asked again and again to forget our sins (i.e., Ps. 79:8; 106:6; Isa. 64:9; Micah 7:18) but remember His promises. On Judgment Day the books will be opened (cf. Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12)!

130:4 “feared” The outcome of a free and full forgiveness by a gracious God is the restoration of the personal relationship with God (i.e., lost in the Fall of Genesis 3), which is/was/will be the goal of creation. We were created by Him and for Him. Fear is the appropriate awe that He is due. Forgiveness results in fellowship! See Special Topic: Fear (OT).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 130:5-8

**⁵I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait,
And in His word do I hope.
⁶My soul *waits* for the LORD
More than the watchmen for the morning;
Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning.
⁷O Israel, hope in the LORD;
For with the LORD there is lovingkindness,
And with Him is abundant redemption.
⁸And He will redeem Israel
From all his iniquities.**

130:5-8 This strophe emphasizes the theme of the patience of faithful followers in God and trust in His word (cf. Ps. 130:5). The concept of “waiting in faith” is expressed in this strophe by two words.

1. BDB 875, KB 1082 – Ps. 130:5 (twice) and assumed in Ps. 130:6, cf. Ps. 25:3,21; 27:14; 40:1; 56:7
2. BDB 403, KB 407 – Ps. 130:5,7, cf. Ps. 38:15; 42:5; 43:5

This is the place where the sovereignty of God intercedes the required volitional response of fallen mankind. Faithful followers choose to wait, hope, trust in God and His promises, even when circumstances and feeling scream to take a different path!

130:6 This metaphor of longing anticipation is similar to Ps. 42:1-2. God's people long for Him!

▣ **“soul”** See full note at Gen. 35:18 online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

130:7 As the psalmist longs, waits, hopes, and trusts in YHWH, he now calls on God's people collectively to do the same.

Notice how YHWH is characterized.

1. in Him is lovingkindness (i.e., covenant, loyal love, see Special Topic: Lovingkindness [*hesed*])
2. in Him is "abundant redemption" (Ps. 130:7c)
3. in Him (and no other, cf. REB) is redemption (NOUN in Ps. 130:7 and VERB in Ps. 130:8, see Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem) for all those who trust in Him (i.e., the covenant people, see Special Topic: Covenant and Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan)

Remember biblical faith is corporate. It is a family! Be careful of the modern western over-emphasis on the individual. Salvation has a corporate focus! We are saved to serve. The goal of individual salvation is the health and growth of the body of believers!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What feelings come to your mind/heart after reading Ps. 130:1-4?
2. What do you think "depths" means?
3. Does God keep a record of sins?
4. Does Ps. 130:5-6 describe how you feel about God and His word?

PSALM 131

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Childlike Trust in the LORD <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents, of David	Simple Trust in the LORD	Act of Humble Submission to God's Will and Guidance	A Prayer of Humble Trust	Childlike Trust
131:1-3	131:1 131:2 131:3	131:1-2 131:3	131:1-3	131:1-3

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 131:1-3

¹O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty;
Nor do I involve myself in great matters,
Or in things too difficult for me.
²Surely I have composed and quieted my soul;
Like a weaned child *rests* against his mother,
My soul is like a weaned child within me.
³O Israel, hope in the LORD
From this time forth and forever.

131:1 "LORD" This is the covenant name for Israel's Deity. See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

▣ **“heart”** This is a Hebrew idiom referring to a person. See Special Topic: Heart.

▣ **“not proud”** The psalmist describes his humble attitude toward God in several phrases in Ps. 131:1-2.

1. not proud (lit. “not lifted up”) – BDB 146, KB 170, *Qal* PERFECT
2. eyes not haughty (lit. “my eyes not raised”) – BDB 926, KB 1202, *Qal* PERFECT
3. do not involve (lit. “walk,” BDB 229, KB 246, *Piel* PERFECT) myself in
 - a. great matters (BDB 152)
 - b. things too difficult (BDB 810, see Special Topic: Wonderful Things) for me
4. composed my soul – BDB 1000, KB 1436, *Piel* PERFECT
5. quieted my soul – BDB 198, KB 226, *Poel* PERFECT

Proud and haughty people are the recipients of YHWH’s wrath (cf. Ps. 18:27; 101:5; Zeph. 3:11) because it reveals the results of the Fall of Genesis 3. Humility shows the results of a spiritual conversion and acceptance of God’s revelation.

There is a real question about what the imagery of #3 means.

1. simply an idiom of humility
2. simply an idiom of dependance
3. someone who does not question God’s great acts
4. someone who does not presume on God’s power
5. a human who knows his/her place in the scheme of things (cf. Ps. 89:10)

131:2 The psalmist continues to describe his humble attitude by using the imagery of a child.

▣ **“soul”** This is *nephesh* (BDB 659), a way, like “heart,” of referring to the whole person. See full note at Gen. 35:18 online.

131:3 The psalmist uses his own humble heart and peaceful hope/trust/patience (BDB 403, KB 407, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 130:5,6,7) to encourage national Israel to the same place.

▣ **“From this time forth and forever”** This Hebrew idiom uses three words beginning with “v” (cf. Ps. 113:2; 115:18; 121:8; 125:2).

1. BDB 773 – ADVERB for current time (i.e., first phrase)
2. BDB 723 III – PREPOSITION
3. BDB 761 – NOUN, *‘olam*, see Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*)

PSALM 132

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for the LORD'S Blessing Upon the Sanctuary <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents	The Eternal Dwelling of God in Zion	Liturgy Commemorating God's Choice of Zion and the Davidic Dynasty	In Praise of the Temple	For the Anniversary of the Transfer of the Ark
132:1-5	132:1-5	132:1-5	132:1-5	132:1-5
132:6-9	132:6-9	132:6-7 132:8-10	132:6-7 132:8-9	132:6-7 132:8-10
132:10-12	132:10 132:11-12	132:11-12	132:10-12	132:11-12
132:13-18	132:13-18	132:13-18	132:13-18	132:13-14 132:15-16 132:17-18

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is obviously a Psalm about
 1. God's promises to David in 2 Sam. 7:12-16; 2 Chr. 6:16 (see brief discussion of "The Davidic Covenant" in NIDOTTE, vol. 4, pp. 507-508)
 2. God's choice of Mt. Moriah as the place for His presence to dwell (cf. Deut. 12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; 14:23-25; 15:20; 16:2, 6, 11, 15; 17:8, 10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11, see Special Topic: Moriah)

- B. The results of God's presence and Israel's covenant obedience are
 1. to abundantly bless her provision, Ps. 132:15
 2. to satisfy her hunger, Ps. 132:15
 3. wonderful worship, Ps. 132:16
 4. God's king exalted, Ps. 132:17
 5. the destruction of the Davidic king's enemies, Ps. 132:17

C. For a good brief discussion of the theology of Zion see NIDOTTE, vol. 2, pp. 959 and 512.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 132:1-5

¹**Remember, O LORD, on David's behalf,
All his affliction;**
²**How he swore to the LORD
And vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,**
³**"Surely I will not enter my house,
Nor lie on my bed;**
⁴**I will not give sleep to my eyes
Or slumber to my eyelids,**
⁵**Until I find a place for the LORD,
A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."**

132:1 "Remember" This is an IMPERATIVE used as a prayer. Psalm 25:6-7 shows the way this was used.

1. God, remember Your unchanging character of grace and mercy, Ps. 25:6
2. God, forget our sin, Ps. 25:7

▣ **"on David's behalf"** Often the people of Israel and her leaders asked God to have mercy on them because of

1. His promises to the Fathers (i.e., Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob)
2. His promises to David (cf. 2 Samuel 7; 2 Chronicles 6:16)

▣ **"All his afflictions"** This seems to allude to David's statements in 2 Sam. 16:12, but it may refer to David's initial problems in bringing the ark into Jerusalem (cf. 2 Samuel 6). The JPSOA translates it as "his extreme self-denial," which would relate to its usage in Num. 30:13 and 1 Chr. 22:14.

The LXX revocalizes the MT (BDB 776 III, KB 853, *Pual* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) to "his meekness" (a NOUN, BDB 776, cf. Ps. 45:4).

132:2-5 "he swore to the LORD" This oath is not recorded in the historical books. Basically David

1. made a vow about the tabernacle being brought to Jerusalem
2. would not enter his own dwelling place (lit. "the tent of my house") until the tabernacle (i.e., YHWH's tent of dwelling) was in Jerusalem
3. would not sleep (hyperbolic) until the ark came
4. Ps. 132:5 states his purpose (i.e., the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle in his capital, cf. Acts 7:46)

It is obvious that #2 and #3 are hyperbolic and used in a literary fashion to show intense intent!

132:2 “the Mighty One of Jacob” This title (BDB 7 CONSTRUCT BDB 784) for Israel’s Deity is first used in Gen. 49:24, where Jacob blesses his children, the future tribes of Israel. It is also used in Isa. 49:26 (promise of universal redemption) and 60:16, where it is linked with other titles for YHWH.

1. Savior (cf. Isa. 19:2; 43:3,11; 45:15,21; 63:8)
2. Redeemer (cf. Isa. 59:20; 63:16)

The NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 232, has the interesting comment that the ADJECTIVE “mighty” has two forms.

1. originally it referred to the strength of bulls or wild oxen
2. to designate YHWH’s power

132:5 This is not referring to David’s desire to build a permanent temple (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:17; 1 Chr. 22:7) but to bringing the ark, along with its portable tent (i.e., tabernacle of the exodus period) into his capital, Jerusalem (cf. 2 Samuel 6).

▣ **“dwelling place”** This is PLURAL in the MT and may be a grammatical way to denote significance, like NET’s “a fine dwelling place.”

In other contexts this term in the PLURAL denotes all the buildings in the temple enclosure (cf. Ps. 43:3; 46:4; 84:1).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 132:6-9

**⁶Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah,
We found it in the field of Jaar.
⁷Let us go into His dwelling place;
Let us worship at His footstool.
⁸Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place,
You and the ark of Your strength.
⁹Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness,
And let Your godly ones sing for joy.**

132:6 “Ephrathah” is an area in Judah which came to refer to the extended family of David (cf. Ruth 4:11). However, Bethlehem was not the location of the ark. They just heard about the King’s oath (cf. Ps. 132:2) to bring the ark to Jerusalem.

▣ **“Jaar”** This is a reference to Kiriath-Jearim (cf. 1 Sam. 7:1; 1 Chr. 13:1-8), where the ark was housed in a private home for twenty years before David brought it to Jerusalem. “Jaar” is the SINGULAR form of “Jearim.”

▣ **“it”** This is a FEMININE suffix, while “the ark” is MASCULINE, so it may refer to David’s oath (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 736; AB, p. 244) mentioned in Ps. 132:2.

The NEB (p. 1000) mentions the fact that on at least two occasions “ark” is FEMININE (i.e., 1 Sam. 4:17; 2 Chr. 8:11). Since this Psalm has several archaic words and forms this may answer the gender problem.

132:7 Both VERBS are COHORTATIVE PLURAL and refer to a pilgrimage to YHWH’s temple.

▣ **“footstool”** Both David (cf. 1 Chr. 28:2) and Solomon (1 Kgs. 8:27) recognized that the temple was not the true dwelling place of the God of creation. David began to call the place between the wings of the *Cherubim* above the mercy seat (lid of the ark) the place where heaven and earth, the invisible and visible,

the eternal and temporal, met (cf. Exod. 25:22)! He called it YHWH's footstool" (cf. Isa. 66:1; see Special Topic: The Ark of the Covenant); also note Ps. 99:5.

The imagery of Deity as having feet is part of the limits of human vocabulary. See Special Topic: God Described as Human (anthropomorphism).

132:8 “Arise” This VERB (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is used in Num. 10:35 and 2 Chr. 6:41 to denote YHWH rising from His throne to go before His people to fight on their behalf (cf. Ps. 3:7; 7:6; 9:19; 10:12; 44:26; 74:22; 82:8).

This verse and Ps. 132:9 seem to be an allusion to Solomon's dedication of the new temple in 2 Chr. 6:41.

▣ **“Your resting place”** YHWH is described in human terms because there is no other vocabulary available to Bible authors (see Special Topic: God Described as Human (anthropomorphism). The ark of the covenant and, thereby YHWH Himself, needed/wanted a physical location for it/Him to reside/rest (cf. 1 Chr. 6:31; 28:2; 2 Chr. 6:41; Ps. 132:8,14; Isa. 11:10; 66:1). Remember, anthropomorphic imagery does not ascribe a limit on God but on human ability to comprehend the God of time and space (i.e., physical creation).

A new book by John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, uses the cosmologies of the ANE to show that Genesis 1 is the account of YHWH building a cosmic temple (i.e., the earth) as a place to rest (cf. Gen. 2:1-3).

Hebrews 3:7 through 4:13 (cf. Ps. 95:7-11) contains a play on the word “rest” referring to three different things.

1. seventh day of creation from Gen. 2:2 in Heb. 4:3,4,10
2. the promised land from Numbers 13-14 in Heb. 3:11,18; 4:8
3. eschatological heaven

“Rest” is both a sense of peace and a desired location of fellowship (cf. Ps. 62:1; Isa. 63:14; Jer. 31:2).

132:9 This verse has two IMPERFECTS used as JUSSIVES.

1. be clothed – BDB 527, KB 519, *Qal*
2. sing for joy – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel*

It is uncertain if there are two groups mentioned (i.e., priests and worshipers) or a literary parallel.

In Job 20:14 Job describes himself as clothed in righteousness. It is uncertain exactly what it means in connection with these priests. Possibly that they reflect YHWH's character and revelations in their leadership, lives, tasks, and duties.

This verse may reflect the festive and fearful march of the ark carried by specially dressed priests and singing Levites.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 132:10-12

¹⁰For the sake of David Your servant,

Do not turn away the face of Your anointed.

¹¹The LORD has sworn to David

A truth from which He will not turn back:

“Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne.

¹²If your sons will keep My covenant

And My testimony which I will teach them,

Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forever.”

132:10-12 This strophe surely alludes to 2 Samuel 7. Notice the conditional element of Ps. 132:12 related to each individual descendant but the larger purpose of God expressed in 2 Sam. 7:14-16.

Notice the sound play of so many of the VERBS of Ps. 132:10-12 starting with *ʕ*.

1. do not turn away – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE
2. has sworn – BDB 989, KB 1396, *Niphal* PERFECT
3. He will not turn away – same root as #1 but *Qal* IMPERFECT
4. I will set upon Your throne – BDB 1011, KB 1483, *Qal* IMPERFECT
5. if your sons will keep My covenant – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT (notice the conditional aspect, cf. 1 Kgs. 9:4-9; Ps. 89:30-45)

132:10 “Your anointed” This is the term (BDB 603) from which the title “Messiah” comes. See Special Topic: Messiah.

132:12 “covenant” See Special Topic: Covenant.

▣ **“testimony”** See Special Topic: Terms for God’s Revelation.

▣ **“forever”** See Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*).

132:11 “The LORD has sworn to David” As David swore in Ps. 132:2, now YHWH responds with His own oath. This oath is known as the Davidic covenant (cf. 2 Samuel 7; Ps. 89:3,35).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 132:13-18

- ¹³**For the LORD has chosen Zion;
He has desired it for His habitation.**
- ¹⁴**“This is My resting place forever;
Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.**
- ¹⁵**I will abundantly bless her provision;
I will satisfy her needy with bread.**
- ¹⁶**Her priests also I will clothe with salvation,
And her godly ones will sing aloud for joy.**
- ¹⁷**There I will cause the horn of David to spring forth;
I have prepared a lamp for Mine anointed.**
- ¹⁸**His enemies I will clothe with shame,
But upon himself his crown shall shine.”**

132:13-18 This strophe describes the things YHWH has done (Ps. 132:13-14) and will do (Ps. 132:15-18).

1. He has chosen Zion (see Special Topic: Zion), Ps. 132:13-14
2. He will abundantly bless (EMPHATIC INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root, BDB 138, KB 159), Ps. 132:15a
3. He will provide food, Ps. 132:15b
4. the temple priests will be godly people, Ps. 132:16 (cf. 1 Chr. 6:41)
5. the temple worshipers (cf. Ps. 4:3 or Levites) will sing aloud for joy (EMPHATIC INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root, BDB 943, KB 1247), Ps. 132:16 (cf. 1 Chr. 6:41)

6. He will establish the dynasty of David in Jerusalem, Ps. 132:17
7. He will defeat Israel's enemies, Ps. 132:18

132:16 Because of the parallels of this strophe, probably “priests” (or Levites) are addressed in both lines of this verse.

132:17 “the horn of David” The horn is a Hebrew idiom of power and pre-immanence (cf. Luke 1:69).

▣ **“to spring forth”** This VERB (BDB 855, KB 1033, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) may be related to the imagery of the special Davidic King called “The Branch.” See:

1. Special Topic: Jesus the Nazarene
2. full note at Isa. 11:1 online
3. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 75

The root for “crown” is כִּוֵּן, which could denote

1. a crown (NOUN, BDB 634)
2. to consecrate (VERB, BDB 634)
3. Branch (a title of the Messiah)

▣ **“a lamp for Mine anointed”** This is a specific usage of the light imagery that refers, not to revelation (i.e., Ps. 18:28; 119:105; Pro. 6:23) but to a Davidic descendant on the throne of Israel (cf. 1 Kgs. 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs. 8:19; 2 Chr. 21:7). In 2 Sam. 21:17 it refers to David himself.

PSALM 133

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Excellency of Brotherly Unity <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents, of David	Blessed Unity of the People of God	The Joys of Harmony in the Family	In Praise of Living in Peace	Brotherly Love
133:1-3	133:1 133:2-3	133:1-3	133:1-3	133:1 133:2-3

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This brief Psalm is difficult to interpret because of its imagery that does not fit well together.
 1. brothers – Aaron
 2. Hermon – Zion
- B. The theological purpose and historical period of this Psalm are unknown. Some see it as relating to
 1. David's day (because of MT title) when Israel and Judah were reunited (cf. 2 Samuel 5, i.e., the United Monarchy)
 2. the post-exilic period when Israel (Mt. Hermon) and Judah (Mt. Zion) are connected again (i.e., Cyrus' decree, 538 B.C.)
 3. a Psalm that asserts the common fellowship of all levels of Jewish society (i.e., special anointing oil runs down Aaron's beard onto "all" his clothing)

4. a way of asserting God's desire for all His people to experience
 - a. abundant life now
 - b. eternal life one day
5. all blessings "descend" (used 3 times – BDB 432, KB 434, *Qal* PARTICIPLES) from God
 - a. covenant people (brothers)
 - b. unity (Aaron's clothing)
 - c. blessings (i.e., dew)
 - d. eternal life (Ps. 133:3c)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 133:1-3

¹Behold, how good and how pleasant it is

For brothers to dwell together in unity!

²It is like the precious oil upon the head,

Coming down upon the beard,

Even Aaron's beard,

Coming down upon the edge of his robes.

³It is like the dew of Hermon

Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;

For there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forever.

133:1 "how good and how pleasant" These ADJECTIVES (BDB 373 II and BDB 653 I) describe the intended experience of humans created in God's image to be a community.

▣ **"brothers"** Exactly to whom this refers is uncertain, see Contextual Insights, B.

▣ **"dwell"** This NOUN (BDB 443 I) is related to the VERB (DB 442) which means "to sit" (i.e., a fellowship meal), "to remain" (i.e., abide with), or "to dwell" (i.e., a place to live). It can be literal or metaphorical here.

133:2

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "the precious oil"

TEV "the precious anointing oil"

NJB, JPSOA "a fine oil"

REB, LXX "fragrant oil"

The ADJECTIVE (BDB 373 II) is the same one used in Ps. 133:1 (i.e., "good").

The NOUN "oil" (BDB 1032) can mean "fat" or "olive oil." Because of the mentioning of Aaron's anointing in Ps. 133:2c-d, this refers to his special inaugural commissioning service (cf. Exod. 29:7; 30:25,30; Lev. 8:12; 21:10).

The High Priest of Israel was both a cultic figure and eschatological Messianic figure (cf. Zechariah 3-4). Therefore, he could symbolize

1. the unity of God's OT people
2. the unity of all people made in God's image



NASB, NKJV “the edge of his robes”

NRSV, TEV,

NJB, JPSOA “over the collar of his robes”

REB “the collar of his vestments”

LXX “upon the fringe of his clothing”

The meaning of the NOUN (BDB 804) is the interpretive issue. Literally it means “mouth.” It refers here to Exodus 28, which denotes a special collar of the High Priest’s robe/ephod that cannot be torn (i.e., a Hebrew symbol of grief). The interpretive question is “how much oil was used?” Is it a symbol of unity (i.e., ran over all his priestly attire)? Is this Psalm about the unity of groups of Israelites/Jews or all mankind (i.e., Ps. 133:3c)?

Just a note, there are two possible roots from which this word “collar” could be taken.

1. garment, clothing – 7מ (BDB 551)
2. measure – 7מ (BDB 551)

133:3 How is Mt. Hermon related to Mt. Zion?

1. unity of the Promised Land
2. unity of the tribes of Israel
3. unity of all people in an eschatological setting (i.e., does Ps. 133:3 mean “life” here and now or “life” in an eschatological setting?)

▣ **“dew of Hermon”** The dew on this highest mountain, easily seen from northern Israel, was very heavy and became an idiom for abundance. Mt. Zion, with YHWH’s blessings on their unity, would have similar abundant moisture.

▣ **“forever”** This Hebrew term (BDB 761, see Special Topic: Forever [‘*olam*]) must be interpreted in a specific context. The theological issue involves the OT sense of a possible afterlife. There is no doubt that by progressive revelation (i.e., the NT) the Bible as a whole clearly affirms this truth, but did the OT? I think so (i.e., Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27) but not always (i.e., Ps. 23:5; 27:4-6). However, even in the OT there is a hint of hope.

1. Enoch (Gen. 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2) are taken to heaven
2. in Psalms, cf. Ps. 1:3; 49:15; 73:24
3. in Isaiah, cf. Isa. 26:19
4. in Daniel, cf. Dan. 12:1-4

PSALM 134

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Greetings of Night Watchers <u>MT Intro</u> A Song of Ascents.	Praising the LORD in His House at Night	A Liturgy of Blessing	A Call to Praise God	For the Evening Liturgy
134:1-3	134:1-2	134:1-2	134:1-2	134:1-2
	134:3	134:3	134:3	134:3

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 134:1-3

- ¹**Behold, bless the LORD, all servants of the LORD,
Who serve by night in the house of the LORD!**
- ²**Lift up your hands to the sanctuary
And bless the LORD.**
- ³**May the LORD bless you from Zion,
He who made heaven and earth.**

134:1 “bless” This VERB (BDB 138, KB 159) appears three times in this short Psalm.

- 1-2. *Piel* IMPERATIVE – Ps. 134:1,2
3. *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense – Ps. 134:3

The SYNONYM (BDB 80) occurs often in the Psalms. See full note at Ps. 1:1. For this term (BDB 139) see Special Topic: Blessing (OT). In Ps. 1:1 it is the faithful follower who is blessed, here it is Israel's God (see Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel's God).

▣ **“all servants of the LORD”** This denotes conscious creation (i.e., angels, humans, possibly other levels of spiritual beings, see Special Topic: Angels in Paul's Writings). A good parallel to this concept is (1) Ps. 103:19-22, where the same VERB is used three times for the angelic world; (2) Ps. 135:1-4, where three “praises” (BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERATIVE) are used of the priests and Levites.

There were five different kinds of temple servants.

1. priests
2. Levites
3. singers
4. gatekeepers
5. the lowest servants (see NIDOTTE, vol. 3, pp. 203-204)

▣ **“Who serve by night in the house of the LORD”** This is mentioned again in Ps. 135:1-4. It refers to the descendants of Levi's family from Aaron who served in the temple in Jerusalem (lit. “stand,” BDB 763, KB 840, strongly implies temple priests or Levites). The PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE, “by night” (BDB 538) means “all day long,” not just those who kept watch at night (cf. 1 Chr. 9:33).

There is a parallel phrase in Ps. 135:2 which adds an additional descriptive phrase (i.e., LXX, NJB).

134:2 “Lift up your hands to the sanctuary” The VERB (BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) denotes the actions of priests. In Num. 6:24-26; Lev. 9:2, they bless (BDB 138, KB 159) the people by lifting up their hands, but here they “bless” YHWH who resides in His temple between the wings of the *Cherubim* over the “Mercy Seat” in the Holy of Holies.

The phrase “lifting the hand” can refer to several separate things.

1. taking an oath – cf. Gen. 14:22; Exod. 6:8; Num. 14:30; Ps. 106:26; Ezek. 20:5 (implied in Ezra 10:5)
2. act of rebellion – 2 Sam. 20:21
3. for blessing – Lev. 9:22; Ps. 134:2; Luke 24:50; 1 Tim. 2:8
4. sign of YHWH's actions – Ps. 10:12; Mic. 5:9
5. the gesture is a general way of referring to prayer – Exod. 9:29,33; 1 Kgs. 8:22,38-39; Ezra 9:5; Ps. 28:2; 63:4; 141:2; 1 Tim. 2:8

The Rotherham's Emphasized Bible translates “sanctuary” in a way that refers to the priests themselves (i.e., lift up your hands in holiness, cf. Lev. 21:6; 2 Chr. 23:6; Ezra 8:28). See Special Topic: Holy.

134:3a This line of poetry shows the reciprocal relationship between blessing YHWH (i.e., worship) and Him blessing (BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) His covenant people (cf. Ps. 128:5).

▣ **“Zion”** See Special Topic: Zion.

134:3b YHWH is characterized as the creator (cf. Ps. 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 136:5; 146:6). This concluding phrase may hint at the theological thrust of Ps. 134:1, that “servants” includes both inanimate and animate creation.

PSALM 135

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Praise the LORD'S Wonderful Works. Vanity of Idols <u>No MT Intro</u>	Praise to God in Creation and Redemption	Hymn Praising the LORD for His Mighty Deeds	A Hymn of Praise	Hymn of Praise
135:1-4	135:1a 135:1b-4	135:1-4	135:1-4	135:1a 135:1b-2 135:3-4
135:5-7	135:5-7	135:5-7	135:5-7	135:5-6 135:7
135:8-18	135:8-12 135:13-14 135:15-18	135:8-12 135:13-14 135:15-18	135:8-12 135:13-14 135:15-18	135:8-9 135:10-12 135:13-14 135:15-16 135:17-18
135:19-21	135:19-21b 135:21c	135:19-21	135:19-21b 135:21c	135:19-20 135:21a-b

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm starts and concludes with
 1. praise – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, Ps. 135:1 (thrice), 3a, 21c

2. sing – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, Ps. 135:3b
 3. bless – BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, Ps. 135:19 (twice), 20 (twice)
- B. YHWH is praised/blessed/sung about because
1. character
 - a. He is good, Ps. 135:3 (cf. Ps. 147:1)
 - b. He is lovely, Ps. 135:3 (cf. Ps. 27:4; 147:1)
 - c. He is great, Ps. 135:5 (cf. Ps. 48:1; 145:3)
 - d. He is above all gods, Ps. 135:5 (see Special Topic: Monotheism)
 - e. His name is everlasting, Ps. 135:13a (cf. Exod. 3:15)
 - f. His memory of His promises is sure, Ps. 135:13b
 2. acts for Israel
 - a. chose Jacob/Israel, Ps. 135:4 (cf. Deut. 7:6; 10:15)
 - b. sovereign, Ps. 135:6 (cf. Ps. 115:3; Eccl. 8:3; Isa. 46:8-10)
 - c. controls water, Ps. 135:7 (see Special Topic: Waters)
 - d. delivered Israel from Egypt, Ps. 135:8-9 (cf. Ps. 136:10-15)
 - e. protected Israel in the wandering period, Ps. 135:10-11 (cf. Ps. 136:16-22)
 3. His acts toward Israel
 - a. chose them, Ps. 135:4
 - b. judged them, Ps. 135:14
 - (1) for their sin (cf. Heb. 10:26-31)
 - (2) or on their behalf against the nations (cf. Deut. 32:36)
 - c. but will forgive (cf. Deut. 32:26)
- C. This Psalm includes a strophe on the folly of idolatry (cf. Ps. 135:14-18). He and He alone is God (see Special Topic: Monotheism). This strophe is similar to Ps. 115:4-8 (also note Exod. 20:23; Deut. 4:28; 29:17).
- D. Many/most of the phrasing of this Psalm is found in other Scripture texts. The date of the Psalm is uncertain (i.e., did it quote or was it quoted?).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 135:1-4

¹Praise the LORD!

Praise the name of the LORD;

Praise *Him*, O servants of the LORD,

²You who stand in the house of the LORD,

In the courts of the house of our God!

³Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;

Sing praises to His name, for it is lovely.

⁴For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself,

Israel for His own possession.

135:1c-2 These phrases refer to priests. See fuller note at Ps. 134:1.

135:1 “Praise” This is the Hebrew term “Hallelujah.” Notice the name for Israel’s Deity is the abbreviated YHWH—Yah (Ps. 135:1,3,4,21), which forms the end of praise (lit. Praise the LORD).

▣ **“the name of the LORD”** See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

135:4 “Israel for His own possession” Israel was YHWH’s special choice (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Isa. 43:21; Mal. 3:17; 1 Pet. 2:9) to reveal Himself to the nations (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 135:5-7

**⁵For I know that the LORD is great
And that our Lord is above all gods.
⁶Whatever the LORD pleases, He does,
In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.
⁷He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth;
Who makes lightnings for the rain,
Who brings forth the wind from His treasures.**

135:5 “I know” See Special Topic: Know.

▣ **“Lord”** This is the Hebrew *Adon*, which means “master,” “owner,” “husband,” or “Lord.” See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

▣ **“our Lord is above all gods”** YHWH is the only God (cf. Exod. 18:11; Ps. 95:3; 96:4; 97:9, see Special Topic: Monotheism). This is where the exclusivism of Israel is very obvious! She was the only monotheistic nation of the ANE.

135:6 “In heaven and in earth, in the seas” This is typical language for creation (i.e., this planet, cf. Exod. 20:11; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 69:34; 96:11; 146:6; Hag. 2:6). See Special Topic: Heaven.

▣ **“the seas. . .all deeps”** These may be synonymous or the first of YHWH’s control of (1) agricultural water and (2) water as a weapon (i.e., lightning, floods, plagues, etc.). The second may refer to the imagery of ANE mythology of YHWH defeating watery chaos (cf. Ps 65:5-7; 89:9-10; Job 26:12-13; Isa. 51:9-10).

137:7 “His treasures” This Hebrew NOUN can mean “treasury” or “storehouse.” The OT often uses the imagery of weather phenomena (i.e., hail, snow, wind, lightning, rain/flood) kept in heavenly storehouses to be used by YHWH, not *Ba’al*.

1. Deut. 28:12
2. Job 38:22
3. Ps. 33:7
4. Jer. 10:13; 51:16

YHWH controls the forces of nature for His purposes (cf. Lev. 26:4-5,9,16,19,22,26; Deut. 27:3; 28:4-5,8,11,12,17-18,22,24,38-42).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 135:8-18

⁸He smote the firstborn of Egypt,

Both of man and beast.

⁹He sent signs and wonders into your midst, O Egypt,
Upon Pharaoh and all his servants.

¹⁰He smote many nations
And slew mighty kings,

¹¹Sihon, king of the Amorites,
And Og, king of Bashan,
And all the kingdoms of Canaan;

¹²And He gave their land as a heritage,
A heritage to Israel His people.

¹³Your name, O LORD, is everlasting,
Your remembrance, O LORD, throughout all generations.

¹⁴For the LORD will judge His people
And will have compassion on His servants.

¹⁵The idols of the nations are *but* silver and gold,
The work of man's hands.

¹⁶They have mouths, but they do not speak;
They have eyes, but they do not see;

¹⁷They have ears, but they do not hear,
Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths.

¹⁸Those who make them will be like them,
Yes, everyone who trusts in them.

135:8 “He smote” This VERB (BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* PERFECT) denotes a complete destruction sent and accomplished by God.

1. Ps. 135:8 – YHWH's promised deliverance from Egypt (cf. Gen. 15:12-15; Exod. 3:20; 7:25; 9:15; 12:13; Ps. 87:4; Isa. 30:7)
2. Ps. 135:10 – YHWH's defeat of the nations of Canaan (cf. Gen. 15:16-21)

135:13 “everlasting” See Special Topic: Forever (*'olam*). This may be a play on the root meaning of YHWH from the Hebrew VERB “to be.” See Special Topic: Names for Deity.



NASB “Your remembrance”

NKJV, JPSOA “Your fame”

NRSV, REB,
LXX “Your renown”

NJB “Your memory”

The Hebrew NOUN (BDB 271) means “remembrance” or “memorial.”

1. human's memory – Pro. 10:7; Eccl. 9:5
2. Israel – Hos. 14:7
3. YHWH – Exod. 3:15; Ps. 6:6; 30:4; 97:12; 102:12; Isa. 26:8; Hos. 12:5

135:18 Those who make the idols and then worship them will be like them.

1. cannot speak
2. cannot see
3. cannot hear
4. cannot breathe

They are lifeless imaginations of fallen, false human hearts and hands. Idols cannot help or know, so too, the worshipers!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 135:19-21

- ¹⁹O house of Israel, bless the LORD;
O house of Aaron, bless the LORD;
²⁰O house of Levi, bless the LORD;
You who revere the LORD, bless the LORD.
²¹Blessed be the LORD from Zion,
Who dwells in Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD!**

135:19 This refers to

1. all the tribes of Israel
2. the special tribe of Levi, family of Aaron, YHWH's choice for His temple servants to come from
In a sense, this tribe replaced the firstborn children of all the tribes as YHWH's servants (cf. Exodus 13).

135:20 "house of Levi" Not all Levites were priests but all priests were of the tribe of Levi. Some Levites

1. served in the temple (see note at Ps. 134:1)
2. served locally as teachers of the Law of Moses

▣ **"revere the LORD"** See Special Topic: Fear.

135:21 "Zion" See Special Topic: Moriah, Jebus, Salem, Jerusalem, Zion.

▣ **"Who dwells in Jerusalem"** See note at Ps. 132:14.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. List the characteristics of Israel's God.
2. Define monotheism.
3. Does God control weather for His purposes? Does that mean God sends all storms, floods, fire, etc.?

4. Why is trusting in idols so sad?

PSALM 136

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Thanks for the LORD'S Goodness to Israel <u>No MT Intro</u>	Thanksgiving to God for His Enduring Mercy	Thanksgiving for the LORD'S Great Deeds on Behalf of His People	A Hymn of Thanksgiving	Litany of Thanksgiving
136:1-9	136:1-3 136:4-9	136:1-3 136:4-9	136:1-3 136:4-9	136:1-3 136:4-6 136:7-9
136:10-22	136:10-22	136:10-22	136:10-15 136:16-22	136:10-12 136:13-15 136:16-20 136:21-24
136:23-26	136:23-25 136:26	136:23-25 136:26	136:23-25 136:26	136:25-26

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. As "bless" (BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERATIVES) opened and closed Psalm 135, "give thanks" (BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVES) opens and closes Psalm 136.

- B. The liturgical repetitive pattern is obvious in the Psalm. The rabbis call it “the Great Hallel.” The Priest would pronounce the first line of each verse and the worshipers the second in refrain.
- C. The structure/theology is
 - 1. YHWH Himself is characterized
 - 2. YHWH’s acts of deliverance are highlighted
 - 3. Israel is called on to praise their national God, the only God
- D. The Psalm is the parallel to Psalm 135.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 136:1-9

- ¹Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
- ²Give thanks to the God of gods,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
- ³Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
- ⁴To Him who alone does great wonders,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
- ⁵To Him who made the heavens with skill,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
- ⁶To Him who spread out the earth above the waters,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
- ⁷To Him who made *the* great lights,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting:
- ⁸The sun to rule by day,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
- ⁹The moon and stars to rule by night,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

136:1 “Give thanks” the VERB (BDB 392, KB 389) basically means “to throw” or “cast.” In the *Hiphil* it is used of

- 1. thanksgiving by singing liturgical phrases
- 2. confessing (cf. Lev. 5:5; Pro. 28:13)

The AB suggests that there was a physical gesture connected to the act of thanksgiving which is the reason this seemingly unconnected root was used.

▣ “for He is good” The first strophe (Ps. 136:1-9) describes YHWH’s person and acts of creation.

- 1. He is good (cf. 1 Chr. 16:34; Ps. 106:1; 107:1; 118:1,29; 136:1; Jer. 33:11)
- 2. He is over all gods (cf. Deut. 10:17, see Special Topic: Monotheism)
- 3. He is the creator of this planet, Ps. 136:4-9 (cf. Genesis 1, see Special Topic: Wonderful Things for Ps. 136:4a)

▣ **“For His lovingkindness is everlasting”** This is a recurrent affirmation of YHWH’s mercy and eternity (repeated in every verse).

For the term “lovingkindness” see Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*). For the term “everlasting” see Special Topic: Forever (*’olam*).

Notice the different ways the significant covenant term *hesed* (BDB 338) is translated.

1. NASB – “lovingkindness”
2. NKJV, LXX – “mercy”
3. NRSV, JPSOA – “steadfast love”
4. TEV, REB – “love”
5. NJB – “faithful love”
6. NAB – “God’s love”
7. NET Bible – “loyal love”

I think the best way to describe this term is “YHWH’s unconditional, loyal, covenant love.” It is theologically analogous to the NT *agapē*.

136:4 “who alone” This is an affirmation of monotheism, Israel’s uniqueness in the ANE (cf. Ps. 72:18; Isa. 44:24; see Special Topic: Monotheism).

▣ **“great wonders”** The LXX omits the ADJECTIVE. The UBS Text Project (p. 417) is divided over which one to accept, the MT or LXX. “Great” does appear with the term “wonders” in Deut. 6:22.

136:5

NASB	“with skill”
NKJV, TEV	“by wisdom”
NRSV	“by understanding”
NJB, REB	“in wisdom”
JPSOA	“with wisdom”

The FEMININE NOUN (BDB 108) is used in Pro. 8:1 for God’s first creation which He used to create all things. Some other passages where this is used are Job 26:12; Pro. 3:19; 24:3; Jer. 10:12.

The concept is parallel to “spoke” in Genesis 1. It refers to God’s creative activities.

The NT asserts that Jesus was God’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).

Notice how the first three verses of the Bible involve the Trinity (see Special Topic: The Trinity).

1. *Elohim* (God), Gen. 1:1
2. *Ruah* (Spirit), Gen. 1:2
3. God/Jesus said, Gen. 1:3,6,9,14

136:6 “spread out” This VERB (BDB 955, KB 1291) is used of God shaping the “dome” of atmosphere over the earth (cf. Job 37:18; Isa. 42:5; 44:24, see Special Topic: Heaven).

The UBS *Handbook* says this VERB refers to YHWH establishing dry land on the waters (cf. Ps. 24:2). This is surely possible.

136:7-9 The mentioning of God’s creation of the lights in the sky was a Hebrew way of rejecting astral worship. This theological imagery is similar to the plagues of Egypt (cf. Exodus 8-11) rejecting the animal deities of Egypt. YHWH, and He alone, is God! There is no other (see Special Topic: Monotheism). Note “who alone” (BDB 94 II) in Ps. 136:4a.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 136:10-22

¹⁰To Him who smote the Egyptians in their firstborn,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
¹¹And brought Israel out from their midst,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
¹²With a strong hand and an outstretched arm,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
¹³To Him who divided the Red Sea asunder,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
¹⁴And made Israel pass through the midst of it,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
¹⁵But He overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
¹⁶To Him who led His people through the wilderness,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
¹⁷To Him who smote great kings,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
¹⁸And slew mighty kings,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting:
¹⁹Sihon, king of the Amorites,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
²⁰And Og, king of Bashan,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
²¹And gave their land as a heritage,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
²²Even a heritage to Israel His servant,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

136:10-22 As Ps. 136:1-9 describes the God of creation (i.e., *Elohim*, cf. Genesis 1); Ps. 136:10-22 describes the God of deliverance/OT salvation (i.e., YHWH, though not mentioned, but implied, see Special Topic: Salvation [OT]).

1. the promised exodus from Egypt (cf. Gen. 15:12-15)
 - a. plagues
 - b. dividing the Red/Reed Sea (see Special Topic: Red Sea)
2. the promised conquest of Canaan (cf. Gen. 15:16-21)

136:12 “With a strong hand and outstretched arm” This anthropomorphic imagery (see Special Topic: God Described As Human) is common in the OT (cf. Exod. 13:3,9; 6:1; Deut. 3:24; 4:34; 5:15; 6:21; 7:19; 26:8; 1 Kgs. 8:42; Neh. 1:10; Ps. 44:3; 77:15; Jer. 32:21). See Special Topic: Hand.

136:13 The same words are used in Exod. 14:27 describing the Egyptian army’s destruction at the Red/Reed Sea.

136:21-22 “heritage. . .heritage” This NOUN (BDB 635) is imagery drawn from Israel’s unique place as YHWH’s special choice (cf. note at Ps. 135:4).

1. He gave them Canaan to fulfill His promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). This is stated again and again in Deuteronomy (cf. Deut. 4:21; 15:4; 19:10; 20:16; 21:28; 24:4; 25:19; 26:1).
2. He gave each tribe of Israel their own land allotment (cf. Joshua 13-19).
3. Israel was YHWH's special inheritance of all the nations (cf. Deut. 4:20; 7:6; 9:26,29; 32:9; 1 Kgs. 8:51; Ps. 28:9; 33:12; 78:62,71; 94:5,14; 106:40).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 136:23-26

²³**Who remembered us in our low estate,**

For His lovingkindness is everlasting,

²⁴**And has rescued us from our adversaries,**

For His lovingkindness is everlasting;

²⁵**Who gives food to all flesh,**

For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

²⁶**Give thanks to the God of heaven,**

For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

136:23-26 This strophe functions as a summary of YHWH's great acts toward Israel as well as His acts as sustainer of all human life (cf. Psalm 104:27-30; 145:15; Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17). This combines the connotation of the titles

1. *Elohim* – Creator, Provider, sustainer
2. YHWH – Savior, Deliverer, Covenant-making God

See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

136:23 “in our low estate” It is uncertain if this refers to

1. period of the Judges
2. slavery in Egypt
3. exile in Mesopotamia

136:26 “God of heaven” This was later a Zoroastrian title for God, so common in the post-exilic period. The Jews often took the descriptive phrases and titles of pagan gods and foreign rulers to describe YHWH.

Heaven is PLURAL, as so many Hebrew words are to denote greatness. The rabbis often discussed how many levels of heaven are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. See Special Topic: The Heavens and the Third Heaven.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What does “YHWH is good” mean?
2. Why is “lovingkindness” such an important theological term?
3. Does Ps. 136:1-4 clearly express monotheism?
4. What event does Ps. 136:6 refer to?
5. Why are the sun, moon, and stars mentioned as creations of YHWH?
6. Where is the Red Sea?
7. Where in Genesis is the conquest prophesied?
8. To what characteristic of God does Ps. 136:25 refer?

PSALM 137

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
An Experience of the Captivity <u>No MT Intro</u>	Longing for Zion in a Foreign Land	Prayer for Vengeance on Israel's Enemies (A Lament)	A Lament of Israelites in Exile	Song of the Exiles
137:1-3	137:1-3	137:1-3	137:1-3	137:1-2 137:3
137:4-6	137:4-6	137:4-6	137:4-6	137:4-5 137:6
137:7-9	137:7-9	137:7-9	137:7 137:8-9	137:7 137:8-9

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 137:1-3

¹By the rivers of Babylon,

There we sat down and wept,

When we remembered Zion.

²Upon the willows in the midst of it

We hung our harps.

³For there our captors demanded of us songs,

And our tormentors mirth, *saying*,

“Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”

137:1 “By the rivers of Babylon” Possibly a better translation would be “by the waterways.” The water system of Babylon of that day involved not only rivers but also manmade canals, like the Canal Chebar (cf. Ezek. 1:1).

We learn from Acts 16:13 that it was an ancient custom for cities with no synagogue to meet by the local river for worship. This may be the case here.

▣ **“There we sat down and wept”** Because of the combination of the words “sat” and “wept” this seems to relate to a funeral dirge setting. Sitting flat on the ground was a Jewish form of mourning.

▣ **“we remembered Zion”** It is interesting that in the Bible it was important for humans to remember (cf. Ps. 137:5 [implied], 6, 7). The term “exalt” in Ps. 137:6 is translated by the Jewish Publication Society of America, in their new translation, as “keep Jerusalem in memory as my happiest hour.”

The term “Zion” is a SYNONYM for the entire city of Jerusalem and the temple area located on Mt. Moriah (see Special Topic: Moriah, Salem, Jebus, Jerusalem, Zion). It is very hard for us to understand the full implication of Israel in exile. She had been promised a Davidic king forever (2 Sam. 7:10, 13, 16). She had been protected during the invasion of the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, in Hezekiah’s day (cf. Isaiah 37). However, Jeremiah told them that exile was imminent unless they repented and turned back to God. The Covenant (see Special Topic: Covenant) had always been conditional (cf. 1 Sam. 13:12, 13), but they relied on ancient traditions instead of personal relationships. Therefore, God’s covenant was made inoperative (i.e., exile) in their day.

137:2 “the willows” Horticulturalists tell us that willows do not grow in the ANE but that this tree (BDB 788 II) is probably a type of poplar tree that grows along the Euphrates and Jordan Rivers. See UBS, *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, p. 170. Some even suggest that the branches of this particular tree were used during the Feast of Tabernacles to build the booths that the people lived in.

▣ **“We hung our harps”** It is interesting to note that all of the VERBS in Ps. 137:1-3 are in the PERFECT TENSE, which may imply that the author lived sometime later than the exile and was writing about a bitter past experience.

The RSV translates the term “harps” (BDB 490) as “lyres.” It is very difficult to ascertain the exact kind of musical instruments involved because the names changed from culture to culture, as did the design of the instruments. It was a small stringed musical instrument.

137:3 “For there our captors. . .our tormentors” It has been suggested by some commentators that this verse is an example of the mockery committed by the Babylonian captors, but the term translated by NASB, “demanded,” is, in reality, the much more simple Hebrew word “ask” (BDB 981, KB 1371, *Qal* PERFECT). It is quite possible that the Babylonians were only interested in the new type of music which the Jews produced. However, for the Jews, they could not sing religious songs in a foreign land because they were committed to the worship of YHWH, who had seemingly been defeated by *Marduk*. This was a time of great confusion for the Jews during this period of history. There was the concept in the ANE that whoever won the battle was empowered by their national gods. YHWH was willing for His own name to be impugned in order for His people to turn back in trust to Him.

▣ Notice there are several words that begin with ו.

1. Ps. 137:3 VERB, “ask” – BDB 981, KB 1371, *Qal* PERFECT
2. Ps. 137:3 PARTICIPLE, “captors” – BDB 985, KB 1382, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
3. Ps. 137:3 NOUN, “songs” – BDB 1010
4. Ps. 137:3 NOUN, “mirth” – BDB 970

5. Ps. 137:3 VERB, “sing” – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. Ps. 137:4 NOUN, “songs” – BDB 1010
7. Ps. 137:4 VERB, “sings” – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* IMPERFECT
8. Ps. 137:4 NOUN, “song” – BDB 1010
9. Ps. 137:5 VERB, “forget” – BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* IMPERFECT
10. Ps. 137:5 VERB, “forget” – BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
11. Ps. 137:6 NOUN, “joy” – BDB 970

▣ **“our tormentors”** This word (BDB 1064, KB 1700) is found only here. It could be

1. a parallel to “our captors” of Ps. 137:3a
2. “those who led us away” (REB), LXX, Peshitta, Vulgate
3. from another Hebrew root (לָלַץ – BDB 237), “make a mockery of”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 137:4-6

⁴How can we sing the LORD’S song
 In a foreign land?
⁵If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
 May my right hand forget *her skill*.
⁶May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
 If I do not remember you,
 If I do not exalt Jerusalem
 Above my chief joy.

137:4 “How can we sing the LORD’S song

In a foreign land” Some have identified this statement with the concept of national deities, but it seems to me that it refers more to the religious character of the songs and that it was impossible to sing praises to YHWH in the midst of such judgment and alienation. I’m sure that the Jews really wondered if God’s covenant was forever broken, if He would ever love them again, and if there was any hope for their nation. God would answer these questions in a positive way in the future but at this period of time there was great confusion and misunderstanding.

▣ **“LORD’S”** This is YHWH. See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

137:5 “If I forget you, O Jerusalem” This shows their faith amidst dark times. Psalm 137:5-6 is a self curse used for literary intensity!

▣ **“May. . .May”** These are both *Qal* IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense.

▣ **“my right hand forget *her skill*”** Notice that the words “her skill” are italicized in the NASB, which means that they are not in the MT. Because the context is singing this may be an allusion to the fact that these Jewish musicians were apostacizing by singing religious songs while in captivity and may have lost their skill as musicians. This seems to be the emphasis in Ps. 137:6, which implies the loss of singing ability.

137:6 “If I do not exalt Jerusalem

Above my chief joy” The literal phrase, “above head,” is unique and may refer to some cultic gesture or symbolic head covering. The LXX takes “head” as “beginning” or “origin” (see Special Topic: Head).

As is so often with these rare poetic words, it is best to remember that

1. the parallel gives us a clue
2. the etymology of cognate roots is often a pointer to meaning
3. the thrust of the Psalm as a whole

JPSOA has “keep Jerusalem in memory at my happiest hour.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 137:7-9

⁷Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom

The day of Jerusalem,

Who said, “Raze it, raze it

To its very foundation.”

⁸O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one,

How blessed will be the one who repays you

With the recompense with which you have repaid us.

⁹How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones

Against the rock.

137:7 “Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom” As humans are to remember God’s grace, God is encouraged to forget (*Qal* IMPERATIVE used in prayer) Israel’s sins, for when God remembers it is usually in the context of judgment. That is exactly the purpose of this statement, that the God of vengeance, Deut. 32:35, will act fairly and justly toward the sons of Edom who violated their own relatives (i.e., the Jews). There is much biblical evidence that Edom participated in the siege, fall, and sack of Jerusalem (cf. Ps. 87:4-8; Jer. 49:7-22; Lam. 4:21; Ezek. 25:12-14; 35:1ff; Amos 1:11; Joel 3:19; and especially Obadiah 10-14). See Special Topic: Edom and Israel.

▣ **“Who said, ‘Raze it, raze it’”** This is supposedly the words (two *Piel* IMPERATIVES) of the Edomites in the day that Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar’s army. However, the new translation of the Jewish Publication of America has, “strip her, strip her.” This is quite possible in light of Isa. 47:2-3; Lam. 1:8; Ezek. 16:37. The metaphor here is of a woman who is publicly shamed. This interpretation is bolstered by the fact that in the next phrase, “to its very foundation,” can be translated as “buttocks” (BDB 414, KB 417, AB, p. 273). I think the first option is better.

137:8 “O daughter of Babylon” It is quite common to call nations by the term, “daughter of.” This is a Hebrew idiom used to include an entire population. See full note at Jer. 46:11 online. It is interesting that the three VERBS of Ps. 137:8 are repeated in Jer. 51:56.



NASB

“you devastated one”

NKJV

“you who are destroyed”

NRSV, NASB margin

“you devastator”

TEV

“you will be destroyed”

NJB

“doomed to destruction”

The UBS Text Project, p. 419, gives “devastated one” a “B” rating (some doubt). The differences between the options are

1. הַשְׁדֹּדָה – devastated one
2. הַשְׁדָּדָה – devastating one

▣ “How blessed will be the one who repays you

With the recompense with which you have repaid us This is simply the OT example of the “eye for an eye” justice of Lev. 24:19-22; Deut. 19:19; repeated in Jeremiah 51. We Reap what we sow (often called “the two ways,” cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12,29; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

There are six imprecatory (i.e., cursing) Psalms, i.e., Psalms 55; 59; 69; 79; 109; 137.

137:9 “dashes our little ones” This was a common practice in the ANE (cf. 2 Kgs. 8:12; Isa. 13:16,18; Hosea 10:14; Nahum 3:10). It is interesting to note that the specific prophecy mentioned in Isa. 13:16 was against Babylon. This seems to be a horrible example of the truth that what we sow, we reap. The historian, Prideaux, tells us that when Babylon came under siege that the women and children were killed in order that more food would be preserved for the military defenders of the city.

▣ **“the rock”** The NOUN (BD 700) has the DEFINITE ARTICLE. It could refer to

1. a name for Petra (often called “the red” city), a capital in Edom (BDB 701, cf. 2 Kgs. 14:7)
2. a way of referring to idolatry, which is opposite of YHWH, “the true rock”
3. some emend the term to “Aram” (a country)
4. a way of referring to a hard surface, like a wall or side of a house. This fits the context and parallelism best.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was the Babylonian captivity such a theological crisis?
2. How do these historical examples in the life of the nation of Israel apply to us in the Church?
3. Discuss the words “forget” and “remember” and how they are used in an OT setting.
4. How does one compare the ancient practices of war in a moral sense with our own modern practices?

PSALM 138

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Thanksgiving for the LORD'S Favor <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.	The LORD'S Goodness to the Faithful	Thanksgiving and Deliverance from Trouble	A Prayer of Thanksgiving	Hymn of Thanksgiving
138:1-3	138:1-3	138:1-3	138:1-3	138:1-2a 138:2b-3
138:4-6	138:4-6	138:4-6	138:4-6	138:4-6
138:7-8	138:7-8	138:7-8	138:7-8	138:7-8

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 138:1-3

¹**I will give You thanks with all my heart;
I will sing praises to You before the gods.**
²**I will bow down toward Your holy temple
And give thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth;
For You have magnified Your word according to all Your name.**
³**On the day I called, You answered me;
You made me bold with strength in my soul.**

138:1-3 This strophe outlines what the psalmist will do (four IMPERFECTS used in a COHORTATIVE sense), while Ps. 138:4-6 reflects what the nations should do.

1. I will give You thanks – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. I will sing praises to You – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
3. I will bow down towards Your holy temple – BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishtaphel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
4. I give thanks to – same as #1

YHWH answered him on the day he prayed and continues to answer him because

1. he is a faithful follower emboldened and strengthened by YHWH, Ps. 138:3b
2. of the character of YHWH
 - a. His name, Ps. 138:2b,c
 - b. His lovingkindness, Ps. 138:2b
 - c. His faithfulness, Ps. 138:2b
 - d. His word, Ps. 138:2c

Notice the number of times the “k” sound closes words in Ps. 138:1-2.

1. I will give You thanks, Ps. 138:1
2. I will sing Your praise, Ps. 138:1
3. holy, Ps. 138:2
4. Your name, Ps. 138:2
5. Your lovingkindness, Ps. 138:2
6. Your truth/faithfulness, Ps. 138:2
7. Your name, Ps. 138:2
8. Your word, Ps. 138:2

138:1 “with all my heart” This is a Hebrew idiom of total dedication (cf. Ps. 86:12; 111:1). This was a way of showing the difference between the faith/faithfulness of

1. David – a whole heart (before Bathsheba and later after the terrible episode)
2. Solomon – a divided heart (when he was old)

Sin was not the issue, all sin (see note at Ps. 130:3-4), but continuing faith and repentance. Relationship with YHWH is the key, not performance based on human efforts.

▣ **“before the gods”** This could be viewed in two ways.

1. the throne room of heaven (i.e., temple worship) is where the psalmist makes his faith songs known (i.e., the heavenly council, Ps. 82:1; 89:7-8; 95:3; 96:4; 97:9)
2. that YHWH is the one true God (see Special Topic: Monotheism), which was Israel’s uniqueness in the ANE
3. note Special Topic: Names for Deity, C. “*Elohim*”

138:2 “toward Your holy temple” Jews and Muslims prayed toward Jerusalem (later Muslims changed to Mecca). This was the place where the one true God chose to dwell (cf. Deut. 12:11), between the wings of the *cherubim* on the ark of the covenant (cf. Exod. 25:22) in the Holy of Holies. It was the place where heaven and earth met.

If David’s reign is the historical setting, then “temple” should be understood as “ark,” housed in the “tabernacle.” Israelites prayed

1. when away from Jerusalem facing Jerusalem (cf. Dan 6:10)
2. when in the temple facing the ark (cf. Ps. 28:2)

▣ **“Your name”** See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH (OT).

▣ **“lovingkindness”** See Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*).



NASB, NKJV “truth”
NRSV, TEV,
JPSOA, REB “faithfulness”
NJB “constancy”

The term’s (BDB 54) meaning can be seen in use of the VERB (BDB 52). See Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT.



“Your word” See Special Topic: Terms for God’s Revelation.



NASB “according to all”
NKJV “above all”

This phrase is unclear in Hebrew. It may relate to “before the gods” of Ps. 138:1b. It is also possible that it relates to “the kings of the earth” in Ps. 138:4. Whatever the specific referent, in the mind of the psalmist it magnified the person of Israel’s Deity. His characteristics are supreme (NJB). See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God (OT) and Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God (NT).

138:3 YHWH’s answer (IMPERATIVE) to the psalmist’s prayer was (two IMPERFECT VERBS)

1. make him bold (lit. “arrogant,” BDB 923) but in this context the unique use of the *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, “bold” is the intended meaning

The UBS Text Project (p. 421) gives the MT (BDB 923, רהב) a “B” rating (some doubt) and mentions the emendation of the RSV, NRSV, which suggests “multiply” or “increase” (BDB 915, רבה).

2. “with strength” – the NOUN, BDB 738, denotes strength or courage

What a difference repentant, faithful prayer makes. Prayer affects us and God (see Special Topic: Intercessory Prayer).



“soul” See full note on *nephesh* (BDB 659) at Gen. 35:18 online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 138:4-6

**⁴All the kings of the earth will give thanks to You, O LORD,
When they have heard the words of Your mouth.**

**⁵And they will sing of the ways of the LORD,
For great is the glory of the LORD.**

**⁶For though the LORD is exalted,
Yet He regards the lowly,
But the haughty He knows from afar.**

138:4-6 As Ps. 138:1-3 described the psalmist’s prayers and YHWH’s responses, now this strophe addresses the nations (i.e., “all the kings of the earth”).

1. they will give thanks – BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. they will sing of YHWH’s ways – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

The reason for the idiom is

1. YHWH’s revelation (i.e., words)

2. YHWH's ways (i.e., exalts the lowly, judges the haughty), Ps. 138:6
3. YHWH's great glory (see Special Topic: Glory)

138:4 “All the kings of the earth” The OT discusses the nations under several categories.

1. YHWH and His Messiah's possession – Ps. 2:8; 82:8; Rev. 11:15
2. their fear/judgment – Ps. 72:11; 102:15; Isa. 49:23
3. their worship – Ps. 22:27; 66:4; 86:9; 138:4; Isa. 66:23; Rev. 15:4; see Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan

138:6 “He knows” This VERB is often used in the sense of intimate personal relationship. See Special Topic: Know.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 138:7-8

⁷Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me;
 You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies,
 And Your right hand will save me.
⁸The LORD will accomplish what concerns me;
 Your lovingkindness, O LORD, is everlasting;
 Do not forsake the works of Your hands.

138:7-8 The psalmist alludes to his current situation.

1. I walk in the midst of trouble, Ps. 138:7 (this is hinted at in Ps. 138:3)
2. he has wrathful enemies, Ps. 138:7b; it is never certain who these enemies are
 - a. fellow Israelites
 - b. pagan neighbors
 AB (pp. 275-276) asserts that this Psalm is best interpreted as a royal Psalm in David's reign because of the lexical and grammatical links to Ugaritic poetry.
3. “what concerns me,” Ps. 138:8a. This, too, is unspecified but the context implies a spiritual or religious motive
4. the use of the word “revive” (lit. “keep me alive”) implies the enemies
 - a. were attempting to kill him
 - b. he became ill

138:7 “Your right hand” See Special Topic: Hand.

▣ **“save me”** See Special Topic: Salvation (OT).

138:8a What a promise to all faithful followers.

1. we all have a divine purpose (cf. Ps. 57:2; Phil. 1:6)
2. the object of our faith will accomplish/fulfill His purpose in us

138:8b “Lovingkindness” See Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*).

▣ **“everlasting”** See Special Topic: Forever (*'olam*).

138:8c “Do not forsake the works of Your hands” The VERB (BDB 951, KB 1276, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE) denotes YHWH’s faithfulness to His purposes.

The phrase “work of Your hands” is a Hebrew idiom for YHWH’s creation of mankind in His image/likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 2:1-7).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. To whom do “the gods” of Ps. 138:1b refer?
2. Define the Hebrew meaning of “lovingkindness” and “truth.” Ps. 138:2
3. Why is the last line of Ps. 138:2 so difficult to translate?
4. Why is Ps. 138:3 so difficult to translate?
5. Does “all the kings of the earth” refer to a judgment scene or a worship scene?
6. Is it possible to define the “trouble” or “my enemies” of Ps. 138:7?
7. What great truth does Ps. 138:8 express?

PSALM 139

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Omnipresence and Omniscience <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Psalm of David.	God's Perfect Knowledge of Man	Prayer for Deliverance from Personal Enemies (A Lament)	God's Complete Knowledge and Care	In Praise of God's Omniscience
139:1-6	139:1-6	139:1-6	139:1-6	139:1-3 139:4-6
139:7-12	139:7-12	139:7-12	139:7-12	139:7-8 139:9-10 139:11-12
139:13-16	139:13-16	139:13-18	139:13-18	139:13-14b 139:14c-15 139:16
139:17-18	139:17-18			139:17-18
139:19-22	139:19-22	139:19-24	139:19-22	139:19-20 139:21-22
139:23-24	139:23-24		139:23-24	139:23-24

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm uses Hebrew poetry (see Special Topic: Hebrew Poetry) to describe the theological Greek terms: omnipresence, omniscience, and omnificence. YHWH is the perfect Judge.

- B. This Psalm describes a faithful follower's personal knowledge of God. It is not linked to God's historical acts of the past but to current faith relationship.
- C. John Calvin has said, "Without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self." This seems to be applicable to this Psalm.
- D. The Masoretic Hebrew (MT) text identifies the author of this Psalm as David. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 38b) attributes it to Adam, the first. However, the Septuagint (LXX) identifies authorship as Zechariah. The MT introductions are absent in the Dead Sea Scrolls. I do not consider them to be inspired.
- E. Brief Outline
 1. God's knowledge of me, Ps. 139:1-6
 2. God's presence with me, Ps. 139:7-12
 3. God's creative providence to me, Ps. 139:13-16
 4. God's justice for me, Ps. 139:19-22
 5. the faithful follower's appropriate response, Ps. 139:23-24

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 139:1-6

¹**O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*.**

²**You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
You understand my thought from afar.**

³**You scrutinize my path and my lying down,
And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.**

⁴**Even before there is a word on my tongue,
Behold, O LORD, You know it all.**

⁵**You have enclosed me behind and before,
And laid Your hand upon me.**

⁶***Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is *too* high, I cannot attain to it.**

139:1 "LORD" This is the covenant name for God, YHWH, from the Hebrew VERB "to be," which implies the ever-living, only-living God (cf. Exod. 3:14). See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

▣ **"You have searched me and known *me*"** The first VERB (BDB 350, KB 347, *Qal* PERFECT) begins and ends the Psalm. Psalm 139:21 is an IMPERATIVE form, which implies Ps. 139:1 could also be understood in an IMPERATIVAL sense. The basic etymology is "to dig into so as to find." YHWH examines the hearts of humans (cf. Job 13:9; 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Kgs. 8:39; 1 Chr. 28:9; 2 Chr. 6:30; Ps. 7:9; 44:21; Pro. 15:11; 20:27; 21:2; Jer. 11:20; 17:9-10; 20:12; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom. 8:27). See Special Topic: God Tests His People.

▣ **"known *me*"** The OT word "to know" is used here in the sense of "intimate, personal knowledge" (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5; this IMPERFECT is used in a JUSSIVE sense, see Special Topic: Know).

139:2 “when I sit down and when I rise up” God’s complete knowledge of each individual life (i.e., Deut. 6:7) is described in Ps. 139:2-4.

1. sit down – rise up, Ps. 139:2
2. journeying – lying down, Ps. 139:3
3. before a word – You know it, Ps. 139:4
4. Ps. 139:2b,3b, and 4b serve as summary statements

▣ The word translated “thought” (BDB 946 III) is found only here and in Ps. 139:17. BDB has its meaning as “purpose” or “aim.” The LXX translates it as a similar root, “friends” (DB 946) in Ps. 139:17 but has “thoughts” in 139:2.

139:3 You scrutinize my path The VERB “scrutinize” (BDB 279, KB 280, *Piel* PERFECT) normally means “to scatter” but here, and here alone, it seems to denote a winnowing or sifting. KB sees the root as also possibly meaning “to measure” (KB 280 II) in the sense of “know.”

The term “path” (BDB 73) is a metaphor of one’s life (cf. Job 14:16; 31:4). The concept is parallel to “the everlasting way” of Ps. 139:24.

▣ **“my lying down”** The Septuagint has the term “bed.” This seems to refer either to nightly stopping places where one sleeps while traveling or to one’s sexual activity (i.e., God knows all humans’ activities).



NASB	“intimately acquainted”
NKJV, NRSV	“acquainted”
TEV	“know”
NJB	“every detail”
JPSOA, REB	“familiar”

This Hebrew root (BDB 698) has several meanings.

1. 698 I – *Qal*, “be of service” or “benefit”
– *Hiphil* used here and in Num. 22:30; Job 22:21, “know intimately”
2. 698 II – “incur danger,” Eccl. 10:9 (*Niphal*)
3. 698 III – “be poor,” Isa. 40:20 (*Pual*)

They all have the same root consonants and Masoretic vowel points. Only context can give a clue to its meaning.

139:4 “Even before there is a word on my tongue” The Peshitta has “deception,” while the Septuagint has the phrase “unrighteous word.” It is obvious that the ancient versions believed that Ps. 139:4 was related to mankind’s evil side. Humans’ spoken words reveal who we truly are (cf. Matt. 12:36,37; Mark 7:15).

139:5 “You have enclosed me” The Septuagint and the Peshitta have the VERB “formed” instead of “enclosed” (BDB 848, KB 1015, *Qal* PERFECT). However, because of the following phrase, “enclosed” seems to be more appropriate. This Hebrew root (BDB 848 II) has a military connotation (cf. Isa. 29:3) or a sense of confinement (cf. Song of Songs 8:9). Here it denotes YHWH’s sovereign control and guidance of a person’s life.

The Hebrew words “behind” and “before” reflect the Hebrew words “east” and “west” (cf. Job 18:20).

▣ **“laid Your hand upon me”** This is anthropological language (see Special Topic: God Described As Human). The “hand” is a Hebrew idiom of power and control (see Special Topic: Hand).

Psalms 139:5b is a statement of YHWH's sovereignty and control of His human creature (cf. Ps. 139:10). This knowledge is comforting to faithful followers and terrifying to the disobedient.

139:6 “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me” The Septuagint puts Ps. 139:6 with the next paragraph. This phrase reflects a knowledge of God which is too much for mankind to comprehend (cf. Ps. 139:14, 17,18; Ps. 40:5; Isa. 55:8,9; Rom. 11:33). Ultimately we must trust God without fully understanding (i.e., Job 1-2,42).

The Hebrew term “wonderful” can mean “difficult” (cf. Deut. 30:11 and Pro. 30:18; see Special Topic: Wonderful Things).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 139:7-12

**⁷Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
⁸If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
⁹If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
¹⁰Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.
¹¹If I say, “Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,
And the light around me will be night,”
¹²Even the darkness is not dark to You,
And the night is as bright as the day.
Darkness and light are alike to You.**

139:7 “Where can I go from Your Spirit” It is uncertain in exactly what sense this question is to be understood. Some see it as mankind's attempt to flee from God because he is evil. Others see it as a rhetorical device to show God's omnipresence. It is obvious that “Your Spirit” in this verse is parallel to “Your presence” in the next line. This is not the full NT Trinitarian (see Special Topic: The Trinity) use of the term “Spirit,” but it is a way of speaking of God's active presence (cf. Gen. 1:2). If I could paraphrase this concept it would be, “There is no hiding place from God” (cf. Je. 23:23,24). See Special Topic: The Personhood of the Spirit.

139:8 “If I ascend to heaven, You are there” This is literally “scale” (BDB 701, KB 758, *Qal* IMPERFECT). This is very similar to Ps. 103:11 in describing God's omnipresence, as far as heaven above and *Sheol* below.

Notice how in the next few verses “contrasts” are used to show the full extent of truths about God's omniscience and omnipresence.

1. ascend to heaven – make my bed in *Sheol*, Ps. 139:8
2. wings of the dawn (i.e., east) – remotest part of the sea (i.e., Mediterranean Sea to the west), Ps. 139:9
3. the darkness – the light, Ps. 139:12

God is present everywhere. No one can flee from Him!

▣ **“I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there”** There are many passages in the OT that speak of God being present in the realm of the dead (cf. Job 26:6; Ps. 15:11; Amos 9:2). The term “*Sheol*” is synonymous

with the NT term “*Hades*” and should be translated “the realm of the dead” or “the nether world.” See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead?

139:9 “If . . .” The HYPOTHETICAL PARTICLE (BDB 49) appears only in Ps. 139:8a but is assumed in 8b,9a, 9b,11a.

The ADVERB “even” (BDB 168) is used in a similar way in Ps. 139:10a,12a.

Psalm 139:8-12 answers the two questions of 139:7. It is hypothetical language used to make a point.

▣ **“in the remotest part of the sea”** Literally this phrase is “from the sunrise to the sunset,” which is similar to Ps. 130:12.

139:10 “Even there Your hand will lead me,

And Your right hand will lay hold of me” Traditional translation has assumed this verse to express God’s personal guidance and protection. However, the Hebrew of Ps. 139:10 and 11 suggests the personification of darkness or a personal enemy pursuing the man of God.

139:11 “Surely the darkness will overwhelm me” The words “darkness,” Ps. 139:11; “night,” Ps. 139:11; “darkness, Ps. 139:12; “night,” Ps. 139:12 seem to refer to *Sheol* (cf. Ps. 139:15). The ancient Jewish translations by Rashi and Eben Ezra, along with the NIV, suppose Ps. 139:11 to be an attempted escape by (1) sinful man in the darkness or (2) the faithful from sinful persecutors.



NASB “overwhelm”

NKJV “fall on”

NRSV, NJB,
Vulgate “cover”

TEV “hide”

JPSOA “conceal”

REB “steal over”

The MT has שָׁחַ (BDB 1003), which means “bruise” (cf. Gen. 3:15; Job 9:17) but this does not seem to fit the context. Therefore, some scholars suggest an emendation to שִׁכְנִי (BDB 962) “hedge” or “fence about” (i.e., protect or cover).

Whatever is meant by “the darkness,” God controls it, and His faithful followers need not fear it! It may even be an opportunity for revelation (cf. Gen. 15:12) or deliverance (plague of Egypt, cf. Exod. 10:21-19; Ps. 105:28).

139:12 “the darkness is not dark to You” Darkness can be (1) the opposite of light; (2) the enemy of light; (3) one’s personal enemy; or (4) simply night time.

Nightfall was terrifying to the ancients. They often personified its sounds and lights in the sky as gods or omens. YHWH controls the night!

▣ **“Darkness and light are alike to You”** There is no where to run or hide from the Creator (cf. Ps. 139:7)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 139:13-16

¹³**For You formed my inward parts;**

You wove me in my mother’s womb.

¹⁴**I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;**

Wonderful are Your works,
 And my soul knows it very well.
¹⁵My frame was not hidden from You,
 When I was made in secret,
 And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;
¹⁶Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;
 And in Your book were all written
 The days that were ordained *for me*,
 When as yet there was not one of them.

139:13

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “formed”

TEV, NJB,

JPSOA “created”

REB “fashioned”

LXX “possessed”

The VERB (BDB 888, KB 1111, *Qal* PERFECT) normally means “to buy” but it is used of God’s creative activities several times (cf. Gen. 14:19,22; Deut. 32:6; Pro. 8:22). Here it denotes God’s special, personal care in the formation of the human person. As He created Adam (Gen. 2:8) and Eve (Gen. 2:18,21-22) with special care and purpose, so too, each human made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). Humans are special!

▣ **“inward parts”** This Hebrew term (BDB 480) denotes the lower viscera of mankind (esp. “kidneys”), which is a Hebraic idiom for a person’s emotions and will. This creation by God implies prenatal formation (cf. Jer. 1:5) of the person and his personality.

▣ **“You did weave me in my mother’s womb”** The term “weave” (BDB 697 II, KB 754 II) is literally the rare Hebrew word “knit.” It is found in only a few places.

1. *Qal* – Ps. 139:13
2. *Niphal* – Pro. 8:23 (possibly related term)
3. *Poel* – Job 10:11

The same root (KB 754 III) is translated “cover” (cf. Lam. 3:43,44). The word is rare and ambiguous but from the context the meaning is clear. Hebrew parallelism is very helpful in interpreting these rare terms.

139:14-16 The UBS *Handbook* (p. 1130) says “The translation of verses 14-16 is full of difficulties, and very few commentators or translators are dogmatic about the exact meaning of the Masoretic text.” This being so, no doctrine that is not clearly taught in other Scriptures should be based on these verses. ANE poetry is slippery stuff. It is for emotional impact and does not lend itself to grammatical and lexical analysis. Remember, context, context, context is crucial. Hebrew parallelism is also a better guide than cognate Semitic roots! See Special Topic: Hebrew Poetry.

139:14 “I give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” The Septuagint and the RSV make God, not man, the object of this statement. Today’s English Version, following the Dead Sea Scrolls, seems to agree with this understanding. The MT has “I.”

The two terms

1. fearfully – BDB 431, KB 432, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE
2. wonderfully – BDB 811, KB 930, *Nipahl* PERFECT

If these two terms refer to God, then they are parallel with the next line of poetry, “wonderful are Your works” (Ps. 139:14b).

The JPSOA translates this strophe (Ps. 139:13-16) as if it refers to God’s creation of a human and not a description of God in Ps. 139:14.

139:15

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, JPSOA “frame”

TEV “bones”

REB “body”

The Hebrew NOUN (BDB 787, KB 870) usually means “might” (cf. Deut. 8:17). Only here does BDB have “bones” (see NIDOTTE, vol. 3, pp. 499-500), although the root is used of the bones of a sacrifice (cf. Num. 9:12) or human bones (cf. Num. 19:16,18). The sense here is human skeleton.

▣ “When I was made in secret” There are several understandings of this verse:

1. relates the term “secret” (BDB 712) and the parallel phrase, “in the depths of the earth,” another name for *Sheol* (cf. Ps. 63:9; Job 14:13; 40:13; Isa. 45:19)
2. relates this to the creation of Adam from the dust (cf. Gen. 2:7) and our creation from the dust being personified as the depths of the earth (cf. Ecclesiasticus 40:1)
3. another possibility is to use the “hiddenness” of the womb and the “hiddenness” of the nether world as poetic imagery, not theological assertions

▣

NASB, NKJV “skillfully wrought”

NRSV “intricately woven”

TEV “put together”

NJB “being formed”

JPSOA “shaped”

REB “formed”

The Hebrew root, רקם (BDB 955), means “variegated.” The *Pual* is found only here. The NRSV is literal. But the root could refer to “kneading” clay or dough (AB, p. 294; TEV, NJB, JPSOA, REB).

139:16 “Your eyes” The OT often uses anthropomorphic language to describe God. Humans have no other language to use but it is always only analogous. See Special Topic: God Described as Human.

▣ “unformed substance” This hapax legomenon has also been understood in two different ways:

1. of fetal development which is known by God (cf. Ps. 139:13-16a; AV, RV, NEV, JPSOA)
2. of all of life being known by God, even before birth (cf. LXX, REV, JB, NASV, TEV), based on the contextual link with Ps. 139:16b

The “unformed” (BDB 166) is from the root “to roll up” (cf. 2 Kgs. 2:8) but here in the Aramaic sense of “unfinished vessel.” AB (p. 295) translates it as “life stages,” from Ugaritic root.

▣

NASB “ordained”

NKJV, REB “fashioned”

NRSV, JPSOA	“formed”
TEV	“allotted”
NJB	“inscribed”

The VERB (BDB 427, KB 428; Owens, *Analytical Key to the OT*, calls it a *Pual* PERFECT, while *OT Parsing Guide* calls it a *Qal* PASSIVE) denotes the creations of a potter (cf. Jer. 1:5). This VERB, like so many in this Psalm, denotes God’s sovereign acts and will.

▣ **“in Your book were all written”** This refers to the two books mentioned in Dan. 7:10 and Rev. 20:12: (1) the Book of Life (cf. Exod. 32:32; Ps. 69:25; Luke 10:20) or (2) the Book of Remembrances (cf. Ps. 56:8; Mal. 3:16). See Special Topic: The Two Books.

YHWH knows our lives, thoughts, and deeds before they are done in time (Rev. 13:8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 139:17-18

¹⁷How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!

How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand.

When I awake, I am still with You.

139:17 “How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God” The translation “precious” is from the Hebrew root “heavy” or “weighty” (BDB 429, cf. Ps. 116:15). The Septuagint translates this phrase, “Thy friends, Oh God, have been greatly honored by me.” For a parallel to Ps. 139:17 see Ps. 40:5.

▣ **“How vast is the sum of them”** There are several interpretive issues in this phrase.

1. The term “vast” (BDB 782 II) is translated “bones” in Ps. 139:16 but there seems to be no contextual link between them.
2. The term “sum” (BDB 910 I) is literally “head.” It could be “sum of a column of numbers.” The ancients added up, not down. This would make a good parallel to Ps. 139:18a.

However, AB (p. 296) asserts a better translation is “essence,” following Ps. 119:160.

The LXX interpreted this word as “rulers” or “principalities.” There is obviously ambiguity here. Remember this is Hebrew poetry, using many hapax legomena and rare words.

139:18 “If I count them, they would outnumber the sand” Psalm 139:17 and 18 are amazing in the sense that the all-knowing, all-powerful, always-present God cares about each of His human creatures!

▣ **“When I awake, I am still with You”** The phrase “awake” is PERFECT TENSE in Hebrew. There have been several theories about its meaning.

1. that it refers to the Hebrew concept of God’s presence (cf. Ps. 73:23)
2. that some Hebrew manuscripts have the term “finished” to give the sense of “finished counting your blessings”
3. some take this as eternal life with God (cf. Ps. 17:15; 23:6)
4. the psalmist falling asleep while counting God’s blessings and waking again to still find Him present (because he could not finish the counting, cf. Ps. 3:5; Pro. 3:24).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 139:19-22

¹⁹O that You would slay the wicked, O God;

Depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed.

²⁰For they speak against You wickedly,
 And Your enemies take *Your name* in vain.
²¹Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD?
 And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?
²²I hate them with the utmost hatred;
 They have become my enemies.

139:19 “O that You would slay the wicked, O God” At first this last strophe seems to be a radical break in the context, but it is really continuing the thoughts of a righteous God and His Personal Presence in a sinful world. The wicked are characterized in five phrases.

1. they are murderers, Ps. 139:19b
2. they speak wickedly, Ps. 139:20a
3. they take God’s name in vain, Ps. 139:20b
4. they hate God, Ps. 139:21a
5. they rise up against God, Ps. 139:21b

The psalmist wishes that they would experience the curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30. The “two ways” has clear consequences in time and eternity (cf. Deut. 30:15,19; Psalm 1).

▣ **“Depart from me”** Note Ps. 6:8; 119:115; Matt. 7:23. This is exactly opposite from Ps. 139:18b, which speaks of God’s presence with His faithful followers.

This last strophe is characterized by IMPERATIVES (seven). There are no other IMPERATIVES in this Psalm.

1. depart from me, Ps. 139:19 – BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* IMPERATIVE addressed to “the wicked”
2. search me, Ps. 139:23 – BDB 350, KB 347, *Qal* IMPERATIVE; the same root appears in Ps. 139:1, addressed to God, cf. Ps. 26:2; numbers 2-7 are addressed to God by the psalmist
3. know my heart, Ps. 139:23 (twice) – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, see Ps. 139:1,2,14, addressed to God
4. try me, Ps. 139:23 – BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 7:9; 11:5
5. know, Ps. 139:23 – same as #3
6. see, Ps. 139:24 – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
7. lead me, Ps. 139:24 – BDB 634, KB 685, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 5:8; 31:3

139:20 “And Your enemies take *Your name* in vain” Notice “Your name” is in italics, which means that it is not in the Hebrew text. The literal Hebrew text, followed by the Septuagint, has “Thy cities in vain,” but this seems to be a difficult translation to understand. The UBS Text Project gives this reading a “C” rating (i.e., considerable doubt). It is possible to revocalize “take in vain” in the sense of “to array against.” It is uncertain if the men referred to are simply ignorant of God or if they are aggressive false teachers.

139:20-22 This is the psalmist’s righteous indignation!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 139:23-24

²³Search me, O God, and know my heart;
 Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
²⁴And see if there be any hurtful way in me,
 And lead me in the everlasting way.

139:24 “hurtful way in me” Some translate this as “idolatrous way” (BDB 780 I). This may be possible because the term “way” can be revocalized “to hold sway.” It is obvious that the author wants none of the attitudes or actions of the wicked, which are discussed in Ps. 139:19-22, in his life even if he does not immediately recognize them.

The other option (AB, p. 285) is to see this Psalm as being from a godly person accused of idolatry.

▣ **“the everlasting way”** This is contrasted to the way of the wicked (cf. Ps. 1:1,4-5). Their way will pass away but following God’s will results in eternal life (cf. Ps. 16:11; Jer. 6:16; 18:15; Job 22:15). This ancient way developed into the OT concept of biblical faith as a lifestyle and became fully developed in the NT title for the early church called “The Way.”

The NOUN “everlasting” (BDB 761) is the Hebrew *‘olam*, see Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why has this Psalm so grabbed the heart and mind of modern man?
2. What is this Psalm saying about God in our daily lives?
3. How do the negative statements of Ps. 139:19-22 fit into the overall purpose of the biblical author?

PSALM 140

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Protection Against the Wicked <u>MT Intro</u> For the choir director. A Psalm of David.	Prayer for Deliverance from Evil Men	Prayer for Deliverance from Personal Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer for Protection	Against the Wicked
140:1-3	140:1-3	140:1-3	140:1-3	140:1-3
140:4-5	140:4-5	140:4-5	140:4-5	140:4-5
140:6-8	140:6-8	140:6-8	140:6-8	140:6-8b 140:8c-11
140:9-11	140:9-11	140:9-11	140:9-11	
140:12-13	140:12-13	140:12-13	140:12-13	140:12-13

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Several names for God are used in this Psalm.
 1. YHWH, Ps. 140:1,4,6 (twice),7,8,12
 2. God (i.e., *El*), Ps. 140:6
 3. *Adon*, Ps. 140:7
- B. Notice how different persons are characterized.
 1. the unfaithful
 - a. evil men, Ps. 140:1a
 - b. violent men, Ps. 140:1b,4b
 - c. devise evil things in their hearts, Ps. 140:2a
 - d. stir up wars, Ps. 140:2b

- e. sharpen their tongues as a serpent, Ps. 140:3a
- f. poison of a viper is under their lips, Ps. 140:3b
- g. wicked men, Ps. 140:4a
- h. purposed to trip, Ps. 140:4c
- i. the proud have a hidden trap, Ps. 140:5a
- j. spread a net, Ps. 140:5b
- k. set snares, Ps. 140:5c
- 2. Israel's Deity
 - a. rescues, Ps. 140:1a
 - b. perseveres, Ps. 140:1b,4b
 - c. keep, Ps. 140:4a
 - d. He is *El*, Ps. 140:6a
 - e. gives ear, Ps. 140:6b
 - f. He is the strength of salvation, Ps. 140:7a (only here in the OT)
 - g. protector in battle, Ps. 140:7b
 - h. maintain the cause of the afflicted, Ps. 140:12a
 - i. justice for the poor, Ps. 140:12b
- 3. faithful followers
 - a. the afflicted, Ps. 140:12a
 - b. the poor, Ps. 140:12b
 - c. the righteous give thanks, Ps. 140:13a
 - d. the upright dwell with God, Ps. 140:13b

C. This Psalm clearly illustrates “the two ways” (cf. Deut. 30:15,19; Psalm 1).

D. This Psalm, like Psalm 139, has a large number of hapax legomena and rare words.

E. The Masoretic scholars suggested three changes (*Qere*) to the MT, one in Ps. 140:10,11,13, which show confusion in the text.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 140:1-3

¹Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men;

Preserve me from violent men

²Who devise evil things in *their* hearts;

They continually stir up wars.

³They sharpen their tongues as a serpent;

Poison of a viper is under their lips. Selah.

140:1-3,4-5 These two strophes are parallel in several ways, especially Ps.140:1 and 4 are prayers to God. The second line of both are IMPERFECTS used as JUSSIVES or even possibly an IMPERATIVE OF REQUEST. So the first VERB of Ps. 140:1, “rescue” (BDB 322, KB 321, *Piel* IMPERATIVE), is parallel to “keep” (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) of Ps. 140:4.

The second lines of both Ps. 140:1 and 4 are the same.

The wicked are thus characterized in Ps. 140:2-3 and 4c-5.

140:2 “devise evil things” This is characteristic of those who do not follow God (cf. Ps. 7:14; 36:4; 52:2; Pro. 3:29; 6:14; Isa. 59:4; Hos. 7:15; Mic. 2:1; Nah. 1:9). By their actions you know who their father is (cf. John 8:39-44)! By their fruit you will know them (cf. Matt. 7:15-23)!

The same VERB, “devise” (BDB 362, KB 359, *Qal* PERFECT) is repeated in Ps. 140:4c.

▣ **“Hearts”** This is a Hebrew idiom for the whole person. See Special Topic: Heart.

▣ **“continually stir up wars”** In context this would refer to interpersonal strife, not armed conflict between nations (see NET Bible, #21, p. 1005). It is possible that as Psalm 139 may have been written against the judicial backdrop of the charge of idolatry, so too, Psalm 140 (esp. Ps. 140:12).

140:3 Notice the number of words with שׁ in them (i.e., sound play).

1. VERB, “make sharp” (BDB 1041)
2. NOUN, “tongues” (BDB 546)
3. NOUN, “serpent” (BDB 638)
4. NOUN, “vipers” (BDB 747)
5. their lips (BDB 973)

All are meant to play on the hissing sound of a snake. Paul quotes this verse in Rom. 3:13 as one of many examples from the OT of mankind’s sin (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,23). See note at Ps. 130:3-4.

▣ **“viper”** This NOUN (BDB 747, עכשׁוֹב) is found only here in the OT. Most translations have “asp” or “viper” or “cobra” but some (REB) have “spider” (BDB 747, עכבישׁ).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 140:4-5

⁴Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked;

Preserve me from violent men

Who have purposed to trip up my feet.

⁵The proud have hidden a trap for me, and cords;

They have spread a net by the wayside;

They have set snares for me.

Selah.

140:4-5 Notice the string of hunting metaphors (cf. Ps. 9:15; 31:4; 35:7; 64:5; 119:110; 141:9-10; 142:3).

1. trip up my feet, Ps. 140:4c
2. set a hidden trap, Ps. 140:5a
3. set hidden cords, Ps. 140:5a
4. spread a net by the road, Ps. 140:5b
5. set snares

140:5,8 “Selah” See full note at Ps. 3:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 140:6-8

⁶I said to the LORD, “You are my God;

Give ear, O LORD, to the voice of my supplications.

⁷O God the LORD, the strength of my salvation,

You have covered my head in the day of battle.

**⁸Do not grant, O LORD, the desires of the wicked;
Do not promote his *evil* device, *that they not* be exalted.” Selah.**

140:6-7 This is covenant language. The faithful follower calls on his faithful God for help and deliverance.

Notice the prayer requests.

1. rescue me, Ps. 140:1a
2. preserve me, Ps. 140:1b
3. keep me, Ps. 140:4a
4. preserve me, Ps. 140:4b
5. give ear, Ps. 140:6b
6. do not grant the desires of the wicked, Ps. 140:8a
7. do not promote their evil device, Ps. 140:8b
8. may the mischief of their lips cover them, Ps. 140:9b
9. may burning coals fall upon them, Ps. 140:10a
10. may they be cast into the fire, Ps. 140:10b
11. may they be cast into deep pits they cannot get out of, Ps. 140:10c
12. may the slander not be established, Ps. 140:11a
13. may evil hunt the violent man speedily, Ps. 140:11b

These are a combination of IMPERATIVES, IMPERFECTS used as IMPERATIVES, IMPERFECTS used as JUSSIVES, and JUSSIVES. This Psalm is a prayer for justice to be done to evil, violent, wicked, proud, lying people!

140:8 “desires” This term (BDB 16) is found only here in the OT. The psalmist prays that the “desires” of the wicked go unfulfilled. God gives the “desires” of the heart of faithful followers because He places them there. Our “desires” (and our words) clearly reveal our hearts!

▣ **“device”** This term (BDB 273) is found only here in the OT.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 140:9-11

⁹**“As for the head of those who surround me,
May the mischief of their lips cover them.**
¹⁰**May burning coals fall upon them;
May they be cast into the fire,
Into deep pits from which they cannot rise.**
¹¹**May a slanderer not be established in the earth;
May evil hunt the violent man speedily.”**

140:9 “the head” This Hebrew word (BDB 910) refers to (1) the leader or organizer of the wicked, violent, lying, proud men who have plotted against the psalmist or (2) an idiom for being victorious. Number 2 fits the context best. There are several “COLLECTIVE SINGULARS” in this Psalm.

140:10 “fire” This is a symbol of judgment. See Special Topic: Fire.



NASB, NKJV NRSV, TEV, JPSOA	“deep pits” “pits”
--	------------------------------------

NJB

“mire”

REB

“miry depths”

This term (BDB 243) occurs only here. BDB has the meaning of “watery pit” or “flood.” For water as an ancient symbol of chaos, see Special Topic: Waters.

It is also possible that the imagery of this verse refers to a fiery *Sheol* (cf. Deut. 32:22). See Special Topic: *Sheol*.

140:11 “speedily” This term (BDB 191) occurs only here in the OT. It seems to mean “blow upon blow,” therefore, it denotes violence. The NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 934, suggests that “speedily” implies that “the slanderer is to be destroyed before he can become established in the country” (i.e., Promised Land).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 140:12-13

¹²I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted

And justice for the poor.

¹³Surely the righteous will give thanks to Your name;

The upright will dwell in Your presence.

140:12 “the afflicted. . .the poor” These are often used in the Psalter for faithful followers (cf. Ps. 9:18; 34:6; 40:17; 70:5; 86:1; 109:22). This may be the origin of Jesus’ imagery in Matt. 5:3-4.

140:13 “Your name” See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

▣ “will dwell in Your presence” This could refer to

1. worshiping in the temple
2. an afterlife with God

Only context can tell; see Ps. 11:7; 16:11; 17:15; 23:6; 31:20.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How is this Psalm possibly related to Psalm 139?
2. List the ways the wicked are described.
3. Why are Psalm 140:6 and 7 considered the psalmist’s confession of faith?
4. To what group does the term “afflicted” and “poor” refer?
5. Does Ps. 140:13b refer to temple worship or eternity with God?

PSALM 141

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
An Evening Prayer for Sanctification and Protection <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.	Prayers for Safekeeping from Wickedness	Prayer for Deliverance from Personal Enemies (A Lament)	An Evening Prayer	Against the Attractions of Evil
141:1-4	141:1-2 141:3-4	141:1-2 141:3-4	141:1-2 141:3-4	141:1-2 141:3-4b 141:4c-5
141:5-7	141:5a-e 141:5f-7	141:5-7	141:5-7	141:6-7
141:8-10	141:8-10	141:8-10	141:8-10	141:8-9 141:10

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This Psalm is set during an evening worship time in the temple (Ps. 141:2).
- B. Like Psalms 139 and 140, this Psalm uses a legal terminology.
 1. let the psalmist not speak (Ps. 141:3)
 2. the wicked are both (Ps. 141:6)
 - a. judges
 - b. witnesses

- C. The imagery of hunting is again applied to the psalmist's persecutors (cf. Ps. 140:4-5).
1. the trap, Ps. 141:9a
 2. the snares, Ps. 141:9b
 3. nets, Ps. 141:10a
- D. This Psalm is dominated by prayer requests (IMPERATIVES/JUSSIVES).
1. for the psalmist
 - a. hasten to me, Ps. 141:1a – BDB 301, KB 300, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. give ear, Ps. 141:1b – BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
 - c. may my prayer be counted, Ps. 141:2a – BDB 465, KB 464, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - d. set a guard over my mouth, Ps. 141:3a – BDB 1011, KB 1483, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - e. keep watch over the door of my lips, Ps. 141:3b – BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERATIVE; the word “door” (BDB 194) appears only here in the OT
 - f. do not incline my heart to any evil thing, Ps. 141:4a – BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE
 - g. let the righteous smite me in kindness, Ps. 141:5a – BDB 240, KB 249, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - h. let the righteous reprove me, Ps. 141:5a – BDB 406, KB 410, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - i. do not let my head refuse it, Ps. 141:5c – BDB 626, KB 677, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - j. do not leave me defenseless, Ps. 141:8b – BDB 788, KB 881, *Piel* JUSSIVE
 - k. keep me from the jaws of the trap, Ps. 141:9a – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - l. let me pass by safely, Ps. 141:10b – BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 2. for the wicked
 - a. my prayer is against their wicked deeds
 - (1) throw down their judges, Ps. 141:6a
 - (2) bones scattered at the mouth of Sheol, Ps. 141:7b
 - b. let the wicked fall into their own nets, Ps. 141:9b – BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (i.e., role reversal)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 141:1-4

¹O LORD, I call upon You; hasten to me!

Give ear to my voice when I call to You!

²May my prayer be counted as incense before You;

The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering.

³Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth;

Keep watch over the door of my lips.

⁴Do not incline my heart to any evil thing,

To practice deeds of wickedness

**With men who do iniquity;
And do not let me eat of their delicacies.**

141:2a Verses like this in Psalms have allowed Judaism to assert that their worship (i.e., without a temple and, therefore, no possible sacrifices) is acceptable to YHWH. Prayer and praise are now the sacrifices.

141:2b “lifting up of my hands” This was the normal position of Jewish prayers.

1. standing
2. head up (i.e., looking to God)
3. hand raised (i.e., as if receiving)
4. eyes open (i.e., a dialogue with God)

▣ **“the evening offering”** Part of the sacrificial system was an offering of a lamb in the temple every morning at 9 A.M. (cf. Ps. 5:3) and evening at 3 P.M. (cf. Exod. 29:38-46; Num. 28:1-8). This became a special time of prayer (i.e., Acts 3:1; 10:30).

141:3 One wonders what the intent of this verse is.

1. court scene
2. gossip
3. verbal attack on persecutors

Notice the two parallel *Qal* IMPERATIVES (“set a guard,” “keep watch over”).

141:4a This verse is a recognition of the sovereignty of God. Moderns must be careful of immediately seeing this in terms of the Calvinist and Arminian debate (see Special Topic: Predestination [Calvinism] vs. Human Free Will [Arminianism]).

This reflects the Hebrew worldview. Their God controls all things (cf. Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Lam. 3:38; Amos 3:6b). Statements such as this are not to be taken as voiding free will or the need for human actions but a recognition of the one true God (i.e., all causality attributed to God, no secondary causes).

The VERB “incline” (BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE) is used in a covenant sense in 1 Kgs. 8:58; Ps. 119:36. For a good parallel to this see Pro. 1:8-19. The desires of the heart reveal the true person.

▣ There is true evil (BDB 948) and rebellion in the world. The faithful follower flees from it and those who practice it.

▣ **“do not let me eat of their delicacies”** This is another IMPERFECT that is used in a JUSSIVE sense. It is uncertain if this refers to

1. a social event
2. sinful lifestyle
3. idolatrous worship setting; it is possible both Psalm 139 and 140 are related to discussions of idolatry

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 141:5-7

⁵Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me;
It is oil upon the head;
Do not let my head refuse it,
For still my prayer is against their wicked deeds.

**⁶Their judges are thrown down by the sides of the rock,
And they hear my words, for they are pleasant.
⁷As when one plows and breaks open the earth,
Our bones have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol.**

141:5 This verse reflects a recurrent theme in Proverbs (cf. Pro. 9:8; 19:25; 25:12; also note Eccl. 7:5). Instruction and correction from a righteous person are treasured gifts to those who have God’s wisdom.

Psalm 141:5 has three IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense.

1. smite – BDB 240, 249, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. reprove – BDB 406, KB 410, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
3. refuse – BDB 626, KB 677, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

These are prayer requests!

▣ **“It is oil upon the head”** The NRSV, TEV, NJB, and REB follow the LXX, “but let not the sinner’s oil anoint my head.” Psalm 141:5-7 is very difficult in Hebrew. There are many divergent translations. Best to get the general sense and move on to the next strophe!

▣ **“in kindness”** This is the important covenant term *hesed*. See Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*).

▣ The last poetic line seems out of place in relation to the first four lines. The NKJV starts the next strophe (Ps. 141:5f-7) with it.

The NRSV, TEV, and JPSOA have footnotes which say that Ps. 141:5,6,7 are uncertain.

141:6 “the rock” This may be

1. a reference to their deaths (cf. 2 Chr. 25:12)
2. a title for YHWH (i.e., “the Rock,” cf. Deut. 32:18; Ps. 18:2,31,46; 19:14; 28:1; 31:3; 42:9; 71:3; see NAB and NJB translations)

141:7 “the mouth of Sheol” The OT holding place of the dead was personified as an animal that devoured (see Special Topic: *Sheol*).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 141:8-10

**⁸For my eyes are toward You, O GOD, the Lord;
In You I take refuge; do not leave me defenseless.
⁹Keep me from the jaws of the trap which they have set for me,
And from the snares of those who do iniquity.
¹⁰Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
While I pass by safely.**

141:8a This is the psalmist’s affirmation of faith in the covenant God of Israel. For “YHWH” and “*Adon*” see Special Topic: Names for Deity.

141:8b “refuge” This is a common VERB (BDB 340, KB 337, *Qal* PERFECT) in the Psalter. See notes at Ps. 2:12 online (www.freebiblecommentary.org).

▣ The second VERB (BDB 788, KB 881, *Piel* JUSSIVE) basically means “to be naked” or “to be bare” (i.e., exposed). BDB and KB assert that here, and here only, it means “poured out” (which has a sacrificial connotation, see *Hiphil* form in Isa. 53:12).

▣ “me” This is the Hebrew *nephesh* (BDB 659), which denoted the entire person. See note at Gen. 35:18 online.

141:9-10 This is imagery from Israel’s hunting techniques, see notes at Ps. 140:4-5.

1. the trap (BDB 809)
2. the snares (BDB 430)
3. nets (BDB 485, found only here but another word for “net” [BDB 440] is found in Ps. 140:5)

141:10 “Let the wicked fall into their own nets” Humans reap what they sow! This is a biblical principle stated so often (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:29; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

▣ “While I pass by safely” This verse expresses the expected outcome of the “two ways” (cf. Deut. 30:15,19; Psalm 1).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is Ps. 141:2 so important to Judaism?
2. Do Ps. 141:3 and 4 support predestination?
3. To what does Ps. 141:4d refer?
4. Is Ps. 141:5-7 all about the wicked?
5. What does “the rock” in Ps. 141:6a mean?
6. Define “the two ways.” How does Ps. 141:10 reference this OT theological assumption?

PSALM 142

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Help in Trouble <u>MT Intro</u> Maskil of David, when he was in the cave. A Prayer.	A Plea for Relief from Persecutors	Prayer for Deliverance from Personal Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer for Help	Prayer in Persecution
142:1-4	142:1-2 142:3-4	142:1-3b 142:3c-4	142:1-4	142:1-3b 142:3c-4
142:5-7	142:5-7	142:5-6b 142:6c-7	142:5-7	142:5-6b 142:6c-7

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 142:1-4

- ¹I cry aloud with my voice to the LORD;
I make supplication with my voice to the LORD.
²I pour out my complaint before Him;
I declare my trouble before Him.
³When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,
You knew my path.
In the way where I walk
They have hidden a trap for me.
⁴Look to the right and see;
For there is no one who regards me;

**There is no escape for me;
No one cares for my soul.**

142:1-2 This Psalm starts out with four IMPERFECTS which denote ongoing prayer.

1. I cry aloud – BDB 277, KB 277, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. I make supplication – BDB 335, KB 334, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT
3. I pour out my complaint – BDB 1049, KB 1629, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 1 Sam. 1:15; Ps. 62:8; Lam. 2:19
4. I declare my trouble – BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT

142:3 “my spirit” This is the Hebrew term *ruah* (BDB 924), which denotes “wind,” “breath,” or “spirit.” It is used of the God-given life force in humanity. See Special Topic: Spirit in the Bible.

The psalmist is confused by the attacks of his accusers (i.e., those who hid a trap for him, Ps. 142:3d, cf. Ps. 140:4-5; 141:9-10; they are also called “persecutors” in Ps. 142:6c).

The psalmist asserts that YHWH knows him (i.e., his path, where he walks, Ps. 142:3b,c and Psalm 139) but it does not feel that way (i.e., Ps. 142:4).



NASB, NKJV	“overwhelmed”
NRSV, NJB,	
REB	“faint”
LXX	“failing me”
JPSOA	“fails within me”

This *Hithpael* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 742 III) basically means “to be feeble” or “to faint.”

1. feeble – *Hiphil*, Gen. 30:42
2. faint – *Qal*, Ps. 61:3; Isa. 57:16
3. faint – *Hithpael*, Ps. 77:4; 107:5; 143:4; Lam. 2:12; Jonah 2:7

It is an idiom of discouragement and hopelessness.

▣ Lines b and c express the truth that God is well acquainted with the lives of His faithful followers. Why problems, sickness, rejection, and attacks come is a mystery (i.e., Job), but the Bible teaches YHWH is for us, with us, and will never leave us. We can face circumstances with faith in Him!

142:4 The psalmist is surprised that no one comes to his aid (cf. Psalm 142:4), not even YHWH. Note the IMPERATIVES.

1. look – BDB 613, KB 661, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. see – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Line d is so sad! He felt all alone, all alone! He felt his situation was hopeless (i.e., Job)!

The LXX, apparently following the DSS understanding, made the IMPERATIVES into simple statements, “I look. . . I see,” referring not to YHWH, but to the psalmist. This is followed by the Aramaic Targums and the Vulgate. I think the IMPERATIVES fit the context best (i.e., the psalmist is addressing God, Ps. 142:1-3).

▣ “soul” This is the Hebrew term *nephesh*; see note at Gen. 35:18.

▣ “No one cares for my soul” The PARTICIPLE (BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) is literally “seek” and the phrase may be translated “no one seeks my life,” but this is easily misunderstood in English. So the NASB caught the meaning well.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 142:5-7

**⁵I cried out to You, O LORD;
I said, “You are my refuge,
My portion in the land of the living.
⁶Give heed to my cry,
For I am brought very low;
Deliver me from my persecutors,
For they are too strong for me.
⁷Bring my soul out of prison,
So that I may give thanks to Your name;
The righteous will surround me,
For You will deal bountifully with me.”**

142:5 This is the psalmist’s affirmation of faith.

1. You are my refuge
2. You are my portion in the land of the living (i.e., note, not the afterlife, cf. Job 28:13; Ps. 27:13; 52:5; 116:9; Isa. 38:11; Jer. 11:19)

▣ **“refuge”** See Special Topic: Refuge (OT).

▣ **“my portion”** See note at Ps. 16:5 online.

142:6-7 There is a series of prayer requests (*Hiphil* IMPERATIVES).

1. give heed – BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. deliver me – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. bring out – BDB 422, KB 425, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

142:7 “out of prison” This must be

1. metaphorical for his confusion and low state (cf. Ps. 142:3-4,6-7)
2. a reference to one taken forcibly into exile
3. an idiom for *Sheol*

The term “prison” (BDB 689) can mean

1. “locksmith” or “smith” – 2 Kgs. 24:14; Jer. 24:1; 29:2
2. dungeon (only three times in the OT)
 - a. literal of eschatological underground prison (cf. I Enoch 10.4,12)
 - b. figurative – Isa. 42:7

▣ **“So that I may give thanks to Your name”** This would be a request to visit the temple in Jerusalem. This is reinforced by the next line, “the righteous will surround me” (i.e., in corporate worship).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. The psalmist asserts YHWH's knowledge of him (cf. Psalm 142:3b, c), but questions his circumstances! Sound familiar? Does knowledge of God's presence and care remove problems, sickness, and evil people from our lives?
2. Is Ps. 142:4 about being abandoned by friends and family or by God?
3. To what does "prison" of Ps. 142:7 refer?
4. Is Ps. 142:7 referring to temple worship?

PSALM 143

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Deliverance and Guidance <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.	An Earnest Appeal for Guidance and Deliverance	Prayer for Deliverance from Personal Enemies (A Lament)	A Prayer for Help	A Humble Entreaty
143:1-4	143:1-2 143:3-4	143:1-2 143:3-4	143:1-2 143:3-4	143:1-2 143:3-4
143:5-6	143:5-6	143:5-6	143:5-6	143:5-6
143:7-9	143:7-8 143:9-10	143:7-8 143:9-10	143:7-8 143:9-10	143:7 143:8 143:9-10
143:10-12	143:11-12	143:11-12	143:11-12	143:11-12

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There are several IMPERATIVES and JUSSIVES OF REQUEST.
 1. hear, Ps. 143:1a
 2. give ear, Ps. 143:1b
 3. do not exile into judgment, Ps. 143:2a
 4. answer me quickly, Ps. 143:7a
 5. do not hide Your face, Ps. 143:7b
 6. let me hear, Ps. 143:8a
 7. teach me, Ps. 143:8c
 8. deliver me, Ps. 143:9a

9. teach me, Ps. 143:10a
 10. let Your good Spirit lead me, Ps. 143:10c
- B. There are three people characterized in this Psalm.
1. YHWH
 - a. faithful, Ps. 143 1c
 - b. righteous, Ps. 143:1c,11b
 - c. lovingkindness, Ps. 143:8a,12a
 - d. in Ps. 143:10c and 11a the parallel phrases (i.e., “Your good Spirit” and “Your Name”) also characterize YHWH
 2. the psalmist
 - a. his spirit is overwhelmed, Ps. 143:4a
 - b. his spirit is appalled, Ps. 143:4b
 - c. he remembers God’s past acts, Ps. 143:5
 - d. he longs for God, Ps. 143:6
 - e. his spirit fails, Ps. 143:7a
 - f. he trusts in God, Ps. 143:8b
 - g. he lifts his soul to God, Ps. 143:8d
 - h. he takes refuge in God, Ps. 143:9b
 - i. YHWH is his God, Ps. 143:10b
 3. the enemy
 - a. persecutes the psalmist, Ps. 143:3a
 - b. crushed his life, Ps. 143:3b
 - c. made him dwell in dark places, Ps. 143:3c
 - d. afflicted the psalmist, Ps. 143:12b

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 143:1-4

¹Hear my prayer, O LORD,
 Give ear to my supplications!
 Answer me in Your faithfulness, in Your righteousness!
²And do not enter into judgment with Your servant,
 For in Your sight no man living is righteous.
³For the enemy has persecuted my soul;
 He has crushed my life to the ground;
 He has made me dwell in dark places, like those who have long been dead.
⁴Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me;
 My heart is appalled within me.

143:1 “faithfulness” This NOUN (BDB 53) comes from the VERB (BDB 52) which denotes “believe,” “faith,” “trust,” and “faithfulness.” See Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT.
 A different word (BDB 105, KB 120) in Ps. 143:8b also means “trust.”

▣ **“righteousness”** See Special Topic: Righteousness.

Notice how YHWH is characterized, see Contextual Insights, B. 1.

143:2 If YHWH counts sin(s), who can stand? All humans are affected by the Fall of Genesis 3 (see Special Topic: The Fall and the notes at Ps. 130:3-4).

Some rabbis assert that sin begins in Genesis 3 but most in Genesis 6. The rabbis assert the choices of humans as the source of evil (i.e., the two *yetzers*). Paul affirms Genesis 3 as the source (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20; 3:23; 11:32; Gal. 3:22). The result is the same, as humans are rebels and need to be forgiven (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:46; Job 4:17; 9:2; 25:4; Ps. 130:3-4; Pro. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; Isa. 53:6; Rom. 5:12-21)!

143:2b The UBS *Handbook* (p. 1151) mentions that this line of poetry, as translated by the LXX, may be alluded to by Paul in Rom. 3:20 and Gal. 2:16.

143:3-4 These verses describe in poetic language the feelings of the persecuted psalmist. The imagery is related to the Hebrew concept of *Sheol* (cf. Job 10:21; Ps. 88:5-6; Lam. 3:6).

But notice the drastic change that comes in Ps. 143:5, when the psalmist reflects on YHWH's wonderful, gracious acts in the past (i.e., creation, call of the Patriarchs, Israel becoming a nation and occupying the land of promise, etc.).

143:3 “the enemy” Note this (*Qal* PARTICIPLE) is linked to SINGULAR VERBS. There are two good options.

1. a collective term (PLURAL in Ps. 143:9,12)
2. one main enemy
3. a reference to “death,” “the pit,” “*Sheol*”

143:4 “spirit. . . heart” Both of these refer to the person. The first phrase is a repeat of Ps. 142:39, see note there.

The same thought is repeated in Ps. 143:7a.

For “spirit” see Special Topic: Spirit in the Bible.

For “heart” see Special Topic: Heart.

▣ **“overwhelmed”** This is literally “faint” (BDB 742, KB 814, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT with *waw*, cf. Ps. 142:3a). This VERB is used with

1. spirit (*ruah*) – Ps. 77:3; 142:3; 143:4
2. heart (*leb*) – Ps. 61:2; 143:4
3. soul (*nephesh*) – Ps. 107:5

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 143:5-6

⁵I remember the days of old;

I meditate on all Your doings;

I muse on the work of Your hands.

⁶I stretch out my hands to You;

My soul *longs* for You, as a parched land. Selah.

143:5-6 This describes the actions of the psalmist.

1. he remembers God's gracious acts of deliverance in the past, Ps. 143:5a
2. he continues to meditate on God's actions, Ps. 143:5b, cf. 105:2
3. he reflects/muses (cf. Ps. 77:12; 145:5) on God's creation, Ps. 143:5c, cf. Ps. 8:6; 102:25
4. he prays to God, Ps. 143:6a
5. his soul longs for God, Ps. 143:6b, cf. Ps. 42:2; 63:1

These are the focus of faithful followers' thoughts. We are what we think about. Our prayers and our acts reveal the true nature of each person.

143:5 “days of old” This NOUN (BDB 869) can mean “ancient” or “before time” (cf. Deut. 33:27; Pro. 8:22-23; Micah 5:2). Usually the root denotes “east” or “before” (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, pp. 869-871).

143:6 “I stretch out my hands to You” See note at Ps. 141:2b.

▣ **“soul”** This is the Hebrew term *nephesh*. See note at Gen. 35:18 online.

▣ **“My soul longs for You, as a parched land”** The psalmist longs/thirsts for personal fellowship with YHWH (i.e., Ps. 143:7b; Ps. 42:2; 63:1; 84:2). This is the goal of Gen. 1:26-27. It was “the” purpose of creation!

Notice that remembering YHWH’s acts and worship gives hope in current circumstances!

▣ **“Selah”** See note at Ps. 3:2 online.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 143:7-9

⁷Answer me quickly, O LORD, my spirit fails;
Do not hide Your face from me,
Or I will become like those who go down to the pit.
⁸Let me hear Your lovingkindness in the morning;
For I trust in You;
Teach me the way in which I should walk;
For to You I lift up my soul.
⁹Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies;
I take refuge in You.

143:7 “my spirit fails” The VERB (BDB 477, KB 476, *Qal* PERFECT) means “to be complete” or “to be finished.” It is used of a person in

1. Job 33:21, flesh fails
2. Ps. 71:9, strength fails
3. Ps. 73:26, flesh and heart fail
4. Pro. 5:11, flesh and body fail

The psalmist feels he is about to die and go to *Sheol* (i.e., the pit, Ps. 143:7c).

▣ **“hide Your face from me”** This is idiomatic, anthropomorphic language of (1) God being silent and not responding to the psalmist’s prayers or (2) God rejecting the psalmist; only context or parallelism can determine (cf. Ps. 10:11; 13:1; 27:9; 30:7; 51:9; 69:17; 88:14; 102:2). It expresses a sense of hopeless helplessness (cf. Ps. 142:4).

143:8c “Teach me the way in which I should walk” This VERB (BDB 393, KB 390, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) basically means “to know.” The NASB translates it as

1. make known – 1 Chr. 17:19; Job 26:3; Ps. 89:1; 98:2; 106:8; 145:12; Isa. 64:1; Hab. 3:2
2. teach – Exod. 18:20; Jer. 31:19; and here

“Walk” is often used as a metaphor for daily living (i.e., Ps. 1:1; Pro. 1:15; 4:14; Isa. 48:17; Jer. 42:3; in the NT also, i.e., Rom. 14:15; Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15).

143:8d “to You I lift up my soul” This could be imagery, used only three times with YHWH as the object (cf. Ps. 25:1; 86:4) related to

1. praying (i.e., lift up my hands/palms)
2. sacrifice (i.e., wave offering or the imagery of the horns of the sacrificial altar)

143:9

NASB	“I take refuge in You”
NKJV	“In You I take shelter”
NJB	“since in you I find protection”
JPSOA	“to You I look for cover”
REB	“with you I seek refuge”
LXX, Vulgate	“to You I flee”

The PARTICIPLE (BDB 491, KB 487, *Piel* PARTICIPLE) basically means “to cover” or “to hide.” It is a very common root in the OT.

The AB (p. 325) translates this line of poetry as “my God (*El*), truly am I being submerged.” Dahood connects it to a reference to *Sheol* by using Job 22:11.

The UBS *Handbook* (p. 1153) mentions two Hebrew MSS which translate the MT differently.

1. “I seek refuge in You”
2. “to You I flee”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 143:10-12

**¹⁰Teach me to do Your will,
For You are my God;
Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground.
¹¹For the sake of Your name, O LORD, revive me.
In Your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble.
¹²And in Your lovingkindness, cut off my enemies
And destroy all those who afflict my soul,
For I am Your servant.**

143:10 “Teach me to do Your will” This is a different word (BDB 540, KB 531, cf. Deut. 4:1; 6:1; 20:18; Jer. 12:16) from the “teach” of Ps. 143:8c. YHWH wants to teach us His will so that His faithful followers can model it for the lost world!

Also note the sovereign God must reveal His will but humans must choose to act (and continue to act) on this revelation. The covenant involves both God and humans!



NASB	“Your good Spirit”
NKJV	“Your Spirit is good”
NRSV, LXX	“Your good spirit”
NJB	“your generous spirit”

JPSOA, REB “Your gracious spirit”

Peshitta “Your gentle spirit”

As is obvious from the English translations there are two theological issues.

1. how to view “spirit”
 - a. imagery of God’s agency (i.e., Gen. 1:2; Num. 11:17,25,29; Ps. 139:7; Hag. 2:5)
 - b. as a characterization of God Himself (cf. Ps. 51:11; Isa. 63:10-11)
2. the definition of “good” (BDB 373 III), which is a common VERB with a wide semantic field; the general sense is
 - a. “pleasing,” “good” (VERB)
 - b. “pleasant,” “agreeable,” “good” (ADJECTIVE)
 - c. “good thing,” “goodness” (MASCULINE NOUN)
 - d. “welfare,” “benefit,” “good thing” (FEMININE NOUN)

For #1 please look at Special Topic: The Personhood of the Spirit and Special Topic: The Trinity.

▣ **“level ground”** The OT uses the imagery of a path/road/way to describe one’s life (cf. Ps. 5:8; 26:12; 27:11).

1. the good/godly life is
 - a. smooth
 - b. level
 - c. unobstructed
 - d. straight
2. the wicked life is
 - a. crooked
 - b. unlevel
 - c. obstructed
 - d. slippery

143:11-12 The psalmist bases his request, not on his own merit (cf. Ps. 143:2), but on

1. God’s good name, Ps. 143:11a
2. God’s righteousness, Ps. 143:11b
3. God’s lovingkindness, Ps. 143:12a

143:11 “For the sake of Your Name” See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.



NASB, NKJV,

TEV, REB “revive me”

NRSV, JPSOA “preserve my life”

NJB “give me life”

LXX “quicken me”

The VERB (BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is the common term “life” (NOUN), “live” (VERB), “alive,” or “living” (ADJECTIVE). This *Piel* stem is used often in the Psalter (cf. Ps. 80:18; 85:6; 119:25,37, 40,50,88,93,107,149,154,156, 159). It is often parallel to BDB 996, KB 1427, cf. Ps. 80:3,17,19. It can refer to

1. physical life
2. spiritual life

143:12 “Your servant” This can mean

1. a faithful follower
2. an honorific title for leaders
 - a. Moses
 - b. Joshua
 - c. David (i.e., Kings of Judah)
 - d. Messiah/Israel (i.e., Servant Songs of Isaiah 41-53)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Since all humans are sinful, on what basis does the psalmist ask for God to hear and help him?
2. Who is “the enemy”?
3. Define “dark places” in Ps. 143:3.
4. What is the implication of YHWH “hiding His face”?
5. Does Ps. 143:10 refer to the Holy Spirit?
6. Define “servant.”

PSALM 144

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Rescue and Prosperity <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of David.	A Song To the LORD Who Preserves and Prospers His People	A King Prays for Deliverance	A King Thanks God for Victory	Hymn for War and Victory
144:1-4	144:1-2 144:3-4	144:1-2 144:3-4	144:1-2 144:3-4	144:1-2 144:3-4
144:5-8	144:5-8	144:5-8	144:5-8	144:5-6 144:7-8
144:9-11	144:9-10 144:11-15	144:9-11	144:9-11	144:9-10b 144:10c-11
144:12-15		144:12-14 144:15	144:12-14 144:15	144:12 144:13 144:14 144:15

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 144:1-4

¹Blessed be the LORD, my rock,
Who trains my hands for war,
And my fingers for battle;

²**My lovingkindness and my fortress,
My stronghold and my deliverer,
My shield and He in whom I take refuge,
Who subdues my people under me.**

³**O LORD, what is man, that You take knowledge of him?
Or the son of man, that You think of him?**

⁴**Man is like a mere breath;
His days are like a passing shadow.**

144:1-4 This strophe uses numerous military allusions. This is obviously a royal Psalm. YHWH acts on behalf of His people to assure their survival because He has a universal redemptive plan involving national Israel (the descendants of Abraham). See Special Topic: YHWH's Eternal Redemptive Plan.

Psalm 144:3-4 is surprising in that the focus moves from Israel to all humans.

1. they are the object of YHWH's special care (cf. Ps. 8:4) because they are made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27)
2. however, because of Genesis 3 they are frail and finite (cf. Ps. 90:5; 103:15; 104:14; Isa. 40:6-8; 1 Pet. 1:24)

144:1 "Blessed" See Special Topic: Blessing (OT).

▣ **"my rock"** This (BDB 849) is a recurrent title for Israel's God. See notes online at Deut. 32:4 and Ps. 18:1-3. Everything changes but God does not. He is the anchor that does not fail, the fortress that cannot fall. Note the powerful, emotional string of descriptive NOUNS in Ps. 18:2!

▣ **"trains my hands for war"** There is obviously a literary relationship between Psalm 18 and Psalm 144. Note the parallels.

1. Ps. 144:1 – Ps. 18:2,34,46
2. Ps. 144:2 – Ps. 18:2,47
3. Ps. 144:3 – Ps. 18:4
4. Ps. 144:5 – Ps. 18:9
5. Ps. 144:6 – Ps. 18:14
6. Ps. 144:7 – Ps. 18:16-17,44
7. Ps. 144:10 – Ps. 18:50
8. Ps. 144:11 – Ps. 18:44

144:2 My lovingkindness YHWH is faithful in His covenant commitments. See Special Topic: Lovingkindness (*hesed*).

Notice the number of PERSONAL PRONOUNS in the NASB of Ps. 144:1-2 (six). The psalmist knows and trusts YHWH.



NASB, NKJV,

LXX

"Who subdues my people under me"

NRSV, TEV,

Targums, Peshitta,

Vulgate

"who subdues the peoples under me"

NJB “He makes the peoples submit to me”

The difference is only a final *mem*. The UBS Text Project (p. 436) gives “my people” a “B” rating (some doubt). This line of poetry either

1. asserts the king’s authority over the covenant people (i.e., he is YHWH’s under shepherd)
2. asserts Israel’s victory by YHWH’s power over the pagan nations

The UBS Text Project (p. 437) gives “under me” an “A” rating (very high probability). If this is the correct text, then option #1 above is the correct phrase.

144:3 Notice the synonymous parallelism.

1. “man” – *Adam* (BDB 9)
2. “son of man” – “*ben enosh*” (BDB 60)

In the parallel in Psalm 8 the Hebrew words for “man” are reversed, but the intent is the same. These terms are speaking of a human person. See Special Topic: Son of Man (from Dan. 7:13).

▣ **“take knowledge”** This is the Hebrew VERB “know” (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERFECT with *waw*). See Special Topic: Know.

144:4 This verse highlights the finitude of mankind (cf. Job 8:9; 14:2; Ps. 39:5-6; 102:11; 109:23; Eccl. 6:12; 8:12) and although not specifically stated, the eternity of YHWH is highlighted.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 144:5-8

**⁵Bow Your heavens, O LORD, and come down;
Touch the mountains, that they may smoke.
⁶Flash forth lightning and scatter them;
Send out Your arrows and confuse them.
⁷Stretch forth Your hand from on high;
Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters,
Out of the hand of aliens
⁸Whose mouths speak deceit,
And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.**

144:5-8 This strophe is a series of prayer requests. It is surprising in light of Ps. 144:1-4. The psalmist asserts YHWH’s power and presence in the first strophe but pleads for His deliverance in this one.

Note the IMPERATIVES and IMPERFECTS used in an IMPERATIVAL sense.

1. bow, Ps. 144:5 (lit. “bend”) – BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. come down, Ps. 144:5 – BDB 432, KB 434, *Qal* IMPERFECT but used as IMPERATIVAL prayer request
3. touch, Ps. 144:5 – BDB 619, KB 668, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Ps. 104:32
4. flash forth, Ps. 144:6 – BDB 140, KB 162, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. scatter (i.e., arrows on alien invaders), Ps. 144:6 – BDB 806, KB 918, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used as IMPERATIVAL prayer request
6. send out, Ps. 144:6 – BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
7. confuse, Ps. 144:6 – BDB 243, KB 251, *Qal* IMPERFECT used as IMPERATIVAL prayer request
8. stretch forth, Ps. 144:7 – same as #6
9. rescue (lit. “open,” cf. Ps. 144:11), Ps. 144:7 – BDB 822, KB 953, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
10. deliver me, Ps. 144:7 – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

144:5-7 These verses use “Holy War” imagery to request YHWH’s presence and power in battle. He will either

1. train and empower the Israeli soldiers (Ps. 144:1)
2. fight on Israel’s behalf as in the conquest of Canaan under Joshua (Ps. 144:6)

144:6

NASB “confuse them”

NKJV “destroy them”

NRSV, NJB “rout them”

TEV “send them running”

LXX “throw them into disarray”

There are two possible Hebrew roots.

1. הָמַם, BDB 243, KB 251, “rout,” cf. 2 Sam. 22:15; Ps. 18:14
2. הָוַם, KB 242, confuse,” this one has “Holy War” connotation, cf. Jos. 10:10; Jdgs. 4:15; 1 Sam. 7:10; 2 Chr. 15:6

144:7 Notice “great waters” is parallel to “the hand of aliens.” The imagery is from

1. chaos of creation, cf. Job 41:1-11; Ps. 74:12-17; Isa. 51:9-10; see Special Topic: Waters
2. invasion, cf. Ps. 18:16-17; Isa. 17:12-14; 28:2; Jer. 51:34
3. death, cf. Ps. 18:4-6

144:8 The aliens (BDB 648) are characterized as those who lie. One’s words reveal one’s heart. This seems to refer to international treaties or possibly court testimony under oath (cf. Gen. 14:22; Deut. 32:40; Ps. 106:26; Isa. 44:20). YHWH is true to His word (cf. Ps. 144:2a), but pagans and some Israelites are not! See Special Topic: Human Speech.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 144:9-11

⁹I will sing a new song to You, O God;
Upon a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You,
¹⁰Who gives salvation to kings,
Who rescues David His servant from the evil sword.
¹¹Rescue me and deliver me out of the hand of aliens,
Whose mouth speaks deceit
And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

144:9-11 This strophe has three emphases.

1. what the psalmist promises to do
 - a. I will sing a new song to God, Ps. 144:9a – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
 - b. I will sing praises to God, Ps. 144:9b – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
2. YHWH’s past acts of deliverance
 - a. He delivered Israel’s Kings, Ps. 144:10a
 - b. He delivered David, Ps. 144:10b (probably kings of David’s line)
3. the psalmist’s prayer is based on YHWH’s previous acts
 - a. rescue me, Ps. 144:11a – BDB 822, KB 963, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. deliver me, Ps. 144:11a – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

Notice the parallel between Ps. 144:7-8 and 144:11.

144:10 “from the evil sword” This is an unusual characterization. Several translations put the phrase in the next line of poetry (i.e., NRSV, TEV, NJB). Other translations have

1. REB – “the cruel sword”
2. JPSOA – “the deadly sword”
3. KJV, Peshitta – “the hurtful sword”
4. AB – “the sword of the Evil One”
5. NAB – “the menacing sword”

In context it seems to relate to the “aliens” (Ps. 144:7c, 11a). The Aramaic Targums (translation with comments) interpreted it as “from the evil sword of Goliath” (UBS *Handbook*, p. 1159).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 144:12-15

- ¹²Let our sons in their youth be as grown-up plants,
And our daughters as corner pillars fashioned as for a palace;
¹³Let our garners be full, furnishing every kind of produce,
And our flocks bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields;
¹⁴Let our cattle bear
Without mishap and without loss,
Let there be no outcry in our streets!
¹⁵How blessed are the people who are so situated;
How blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!

144:12-14 This strophe is characterized by seven PARTICIPLES (1) used as JUSSIVES (2) statements of fact.

1. young sons as grown up plants, Ps. 144:12a – BDB 152, KB 178, *Pual*
2. young daughters as fashioned (lit. “hewn”) pillars, Ps. 144:12b – BDB 310, KB 306, *Pual*
3. garners producing, Ps. 144:13a – BDB 807, KB 920, *Hiphil*
4. flocks bringing forth thousands, Ps. 144:13b – BDB 48 II, KB 59, *Hiphil* (found only here)
5. flocks bringing forth ten thousands, Ps. 144:13b – BDB 912, KB 1174, *Pual*
6. cattle bear (lit. be heavy with young), Ps. 144:14a – BDB 687, KB 741, *Pual*
7. going out (i.e., “bearing”) with no problems, Ps. 144:14b – BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal*
8. there is an implied PARTICIPLE in Ps. 144:14c – NASB has “let,” which matches Ps. 144:12-14b, “let there be no outcry in our streets”

These are all blessings of covenant obedience (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30). Notice the covenant blessing of Ps. 144:15. NASB translates both Ps. 144:1 and 15 as “blessed,” but they are different Hebrew words.

1. Ps. 144:1 – BDB 138
2. Ps. 144:15 – BDB 80

The term “happy” or “blessed” (BDB 80, cf. Ps. 1:1) is recurrent and describes why they are blessed (cf. Ps. 32:1-2; 34:8; 40:4; 84:5,12; 94:12; 127:5; Pro. 3:13; 8:34; 28:14). It is also used of corporate blessings (cf. Ps. 33:12; 89:15; 144:15).

144:12 The term “plants” (BDB 642) occurs only here but it is very close to the normal root for “plant.”

1. plant (here) – נָטַע
2. plant – נָטַע, used often

▣ **“corner pillars”** This is also a rare term, found only here and in Zech. 9:15.

144:13 “garner” This term (BDB 265, KB 565) is also found only here in the OT (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 909). Most translations have “barns.”

144:14 There are two ways to view this verse.

1. It goes with Ps. 144:13b and relates to healthy, fruitful livestock (NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 498).
2. It goes with Ps. 144:14b,c and relates to a prayer for no breach in the city wall, which would allow an invader entrance.

The UBS *Handbook* (p. 1161) asserts there is no way from the text or context to know which option is best.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How is this Psalm related to Psalm 18?
2. How do Ps. 144:3 and 4 relate to Ps. 144:1 and 2?
3. How does Ps. 144:5-7 relate to “Holy War”?
4. To what or whom does “great waters” in Ps. 144:7 refer?
5. Why does the MT introduction not fit Ps. 144:10?
6. Are Ps. 144:12-14 prayers or statements?

PSALM 145

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD Extolled for His Goodness <u>MT Intro</u> A Psalm of praise, of David.	A Song of God's Majesty and Love	Hymn Epitomizing the Character of the God of Israel (an acrostic)	A Hymn of Praise	Praise to Yahweh the King (acrostic)
145:1-7	145:1-3 145:4-7	145:1-3 145:4-7	145:1-3 145:4-9	145:1-3 145:4-5 145:6-7
145:8-13	145:8-9 145:10-13	145:8-9 145:10-13b 145:13c-20	145:10-13b 145:13c-16	145:8-9 145:10-11 145:12-13b 145:13c-14
145:14-16	145:14-16			145:15-16
145:17-21	145:17-21		145:17-20 145:21	145:17-18 145:19-20 145:21

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is an acrostic Psalm. There are other examples in the Psalter.
 1. Psalm 9 and 10
 2. Psalm 25

3. Psalm 34
4. Psalm 37
5. Psalm 111
6. Psalm 112
7. Psalm 119
8. Psalm 145

Acrostics can also be seen in Pro. 31:16-31 and Lamentations 1; 2; 3; and 4. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. There are only 21 verses in this Psalm, so obviously one letter is omitted. The Hebrew “N” has somehow been misplaced in the Masoretic text (see Special Topic: Textual Criticism). It is included in all of the ancient versions—the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Peshitta. We find it in one Hebrew manuscript in the Dead Sea Scrolls, 11QPs^a.

- B. This Psalm is about the character of Israel’s God and His acts which reveal that character. See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God.
- C. This Psalm has a unique universal element which can be seen in Ps. 145:8-21. This is one of the unique glimpses into the heart of God which shows His love for all peoples of the earth and of His desire for all people to know Him by faith (cf. Ezek. 18:23,32; John 3:16; 4:42; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:1; 4:14; see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 145:1-7

- ¹**I will extol You, my God, O King,
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.**
- ²**Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.**
- ³**Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised,
And His greatness is unsearchable.**
- ⁴**One generation shall praise Your works to another,
And shall declare Your mighty acts.**
- ⁵**On the glorious splendor of Your majesty
And on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.**
- ⁶**Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts,
And I will tell of Your greatness.**
- ⁷**They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness
And will shout joyfully of Your righteousness.**

145:1 “I will extol You” Notice the personal element expressed so often in Ps. 145:1-7. This is clearly seen by the phrase, “my God.” It is obvious that personal faith is the beginning point in understanding the God of creation and in history.

This opening strophe (i.e., Ps. 145:1-7) has several COHORTATIVES.

1. I will extol You, Ps. 145:1 – BDB 926, KB 1202, *Polel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. I will bless Your name, Ps. 145:1 – BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
3. I will bless You, Ps. 145:2 – BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

4. I will praise Your name, Ps. 145:3 – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
5. I will meditate on Your wonderful works, Ps. 145:5 – BDB 967, KB 1319, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
6. I will tell of Your greatness, Ps. 145:6 – BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

True faithful followers must express their faith and praise of YHWH.

▣ **“O King”** YHWH was the true King of Israel (cf. 1 Sam. 8:7). The earthly king was only a mere representative of the heavenly King (cf. Ps. 10:16; 29:10; 98:6).

▣ **“I will bless Your name”** The concept of “blessing” (BDB 138–VERB, 139–NOUN) is part of the Hebrew theology related to the power of the spoken word. See Special Topic: Blessing (OT).

The term “name” (BDB 1027) is a Hebraic way of referring to the person. See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

Israel’s Deity is called *Eloah* in Ps. 145:1 but YHWH nine times in the rest of the Psalm. See Special Topic: Names for Deity.

▣ **“forever and ever”** The phrase is used in Ps. 145:1b and 2b and seems to be used in the same sense in Ps. 34:1, which is explicitly expressed in Ps. 145:2a. It is not really an affirmation of the afterlife but a Hebrew idiom of daily praise. See Special Topic: Forever (*‘olam*).

145:3 “His greatness is unsearchable” The NOUN “greatness” (BDB 153) is used of both

1. God Himself – 1 Chr. 29:11; Ps. 48:1; 86:10; 147:5
2. His acts – 2 Sam. 7:21; 1 Chr. 17:19-21

“Unsearchable” (lit. “there is no searching,” i.e., NOUN CONSTRUCT) is used in Job 5:9; 9:10; 11:7. The same concept of God’s ways being far above our understanding is expressed in Ps. 40:5,28; 139:6; Isa. 40:28; 55:8,9; Rom. 11:33.

145:4 “One generation shall praise Your works to another” This is an emphasis of passing on their faith to their children (cf. Deut. 4:9,10; 6:7,20-25; 11:19; 32:7,46; Ps. 22:30,31).

The VERBS of Ps. 145:4 are IMPERFECTS but they may be JUSSIVE in meaning, describing the psalmist’s wishes/prayers. The same is true of Ps. 145:6 and 7 (NET Bible, p. 1009).

▣ **“Your mighty acts”** This emphasis is on the God who acts in fidelity to His covenant promises, cf. Ps. 145:4,5,6,7,12. Usually this term refers to God’s past redemptive acts, such as the Exodus.

145:5 “On the glorious splendor of Your majesty” Human vocabulary is quite inadequate to express the glory of God (see Special Topic: Glory [OT]). Here is a series of words which are linked together in order to catch the glorious nature of God.

1. splendor – BDB 214, cf. 1 Chr. 16:27; Ps. 29:4; 90:16; 96:6; 104:1; 111:3; Isa. 2:10,19,21
2. majesty – BDB 217, cf. 1 Chr. 16:27; 29:11; Ps. 96:6; 111:3; 148:13
3. wondrous – BDB 810, see Special Topic: Wonderful Things

▣ **“I will meditate”** Faithful followers will remember YHWH’s great acts, cf. Ps. 145:7. It is amazing how many times in the Bible faithful followers are admonished to remember what God has done!

145:6 “Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts” This is the first allusion to “all men,” which is the common refrain of Ps. 145:8-21. This has contextual potential of including all Gentiles, as well as Jews. However, it may be a literary necessity which is produced by the acrostic form of writing.

Notice the number of ways the psalmist refers to YHWH's works.

1. Your works, Ps. 145:4a, 9b, 10a
2. Your mighty acts, Ps. 145:4b, 12
3. Your wonderful works, Ps. 145:5b
4. Your awesome acts, Ps. 145:6a

This refers to

1. the creation and/or the flood
2. acts of forgiveness and restoration
3. call of Abraham and the Patriarchs
4. the Exodus
5. the Conquest
6. victories in battle
7. etc.

145:7 “eagerly utter” The VERB (BDB 615, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) means “to bubble up.” It is used often in a metaphorical sense (cf. Psalm 19:2; 78:2; 119:171, 145:7). It denotes a constant, excited proclamation.

▣ **“Your righteousness”** The term “righteousness” (BDB 842) comes from the Hebrew root, “a measuring reed.” It can be used in two ways in the OT:

1. God's transcendent holiness and eternity
2. His acts of redeeming Israel

See Special Topic: Righteousness.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 145:8-13

- ⁸The LORD is gracious and merciful;
Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.
⁹The LORD is good to all,
And His mercies are over all His works.
¹⁰All Your works shall give thanks to You, O LORD,
And Your godly ones shall bless You.
¹¹They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom
And talk of Your power;
¹²To make known to the sons of men Your mighty acts
And the glory of the majesty of Your kingdom.
¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And Your dominion *endures* throughout all generations.

145:8 “The LORD is gracious and merciful;

Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness” This is a direct quote from Exod. 34:6,7 and is repeated in Ps. 103:8. It not only gives us the characteristics of God's nature, but again shows one of His mighty acts in history initiated by grace, not by human merit (i.e., the Exodus). See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel's God.

145:9 “The LORD is good to all,

And His mercies are over all His works” God has an everlasting love for humans created in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 3:8). See Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan.

145:10 “All Your works shall give thanks to You, O LORD” Compare this with Ps. 103:19-22.



NASB	“godly ones”
NKJV, Peshitta	“saints”
NRSV, NJB	“faithful”
TEV	“people”
JPSOA	“faithful ones”
REB	“loyal servants”
LXX	“devout”

This Hebrew ADJECTIVE (BDB 339) is based on the root חסד (“*hesed*,” BDB 338, see Special Topic: Lovingkindness [*hesed*]). It is predominately used for faithful covenant followers (cf. 1 Sam. 2:9; Ps. 4:3; 12:1; 30:4; 31:24; 37:28; 50:5; 79:2; 85:8; 86:2; 89:19; 97:10; 116:15; 145:10; 148:14; 149:9), but could also refer to

1. priests – Deut. 33:8; 2 Chr. 6:4; Ps. 132:16
2. the Messiah – Ps. 16:10
3. angels of the heavenly council – Ps. 29:1; 103:19-22; 148:2; and this strophe

145:11-12 These verses can refer to

1. angelic praise – see #3 in Ps. 145:10
2. faithful followers’ task of making YHWH known to all humans (i.e., “sons of men”)

It is hard to decide which is to be preferred. Number 1 represents all creation glorifying its Creator (cf. Ps. 103:19-22; 148:2) and number 2 is the purpose of the call of Abraham (see Special Topic: YHWH’s Eternal Redemptive Plan).

145:13 “Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom” This concept of an eternal kingdom is found in Ps. 10:16; 29:10; Isa. 9:6-7; Dan. 2:44; 4:3,34; 6:26; 7:14,26; 2 Pet. 1:11. See Special Topic: The Kingdom of God.

▣ **“deed”** This is where most modern translations insert the missing *nun* phrase from the LXX, Peshitta and Vulgate, and one Hebrew manuscript of the Dead Sea Scrolls (i.e., 11QPs^a), “God is faithful in all His words and gracious in all His deeds.” This is very similar to Ps. 145:17.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 145:14-16

¹⁴The LORD sustains all who fall

And raises up all who are bowed down.

¹⁵The eyes of all look to You,

And You give them their food in due time.

¹⁶You open Your hand

And satisfy the desire of every living thing.

145:14 “The LORD sustains all who fall” Psalm 145:14-16 speaks of God providing faithful followers’ physical needs, while Ps. 145:17-21 speaks of God providing for their spiritual needs. Notice the repetitive use of the term “all.”

145:15 “The eyes of all look to You” These verses state that God provides food for all of His creatures, cf. Ps. 104:27,28; 136:25.

145:16 This is the concept of “Providence.” God creates and sustains this planet and all its life forms. This action in the OT is attributed to *Elohim* (see Special Topic: Names for Deity).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 145:17-21

**¹⁷The LORD is righteous in all His ways
And kind in all His deeds.**

**¹⁸The LORD is near to all who call upon Him,
To all who call upon Him in truth.**

**¹⁹He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;
He will also hear their cry and will save them.**

**²⁰The LORD keeps all who love Him,
But all the wicked He will destroy.**

**²¹My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
And all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever.**

145:17 “And kind in all His deeds” This is the Hebrew word *hesed*, which speaks of God’s covenant loyalty. It was used earlier in Ps. 145:8 to describe God’s character and here to describe God’s acts.

145:18 “The LORD is near” This is an emphasis on the eminence of God, while Ps. 145:5 is denoting His transcendence, cf. Ps. 34:18; 119:151; and especially Deut. 4:7.

▣ **“To all who call upon Him”** There is a series of conditions (i.e., Ps. 145:18-20). It must be remembered that all of God’s covenants are unconditional on His part but conditional on human response. These four conditions speak of repentance and faith, both initial and ongoing, on the part of the people of God. See notes at Rom. 10:9-13 online.

145:19 “those who fear Him” See Special Topic: Fear (OT).

145:20 “But all the wicked He will destroy” This does not speak of annihilation in death but of physical judgment, cf. Ezek. 14:9; Amos 9:8; Hab. 2:2 (see Robert Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 178).

145:21 “And all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever” Again, this is like Ps. 145:1 and 3. It is not an affirmation of an afterlife, but that certainly is implied, as in Phil. 2:6-11.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. List the praise-worthy attributes of God.
2. This Psalm refers to YHWH's acts in several verses and in several ways. What acts is it referring to?
3. How does Ps. 145:8-16 (and 145:21) communicate YHWH's universal love?
4. Who are "the godly ones" of Ps. 145:10?
5. Who are "the sons of men" of Ps. 145:12?
6. Does the OT focus on an eternal kingdom or a millennium?
7. How does the "transcendence" of Ps. 145:5 relate to the "eminence" of Ps. 145:18?
8. List the four conditions of Ps. 145:18-20 which relate to faithful followers.

PSALM 146

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The LORD An Abundant Helper <u>No MT Intro</u>	The Happiness of Those Whose Help Is In the LORD	Hymn Praising God for His Help	In Praise of God the Savior	Hymn to the God of Help
146:1-7	146:1a 146:1b-2 146:3-4 146:5-7	146:1-2 146:3-4 146:5-7b 146:7c-9	146:1-2 146:3-4 146:5-7b 146:7c-9	146:1-2 146:3-4 146:5-6b 146:6c-7 146:8-9 146:8c 146:9c 146:10
146:8-10	146:8-9 146:10	 146:10	 146:10	 146:10

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 146:1-7

¹Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

²I will praise the LORD while I live;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

³Do not trust in princes,

In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation.

⁴His spirit departs, he returns to the earth;

In that very day his thoughts perish.

⁵How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,

Whose hope is in the LORD his God,

⁶Who made heaven and earth,

The sea and all that is in them;

Who keeps faith forever;

⁷Who executes justice for the oppressed;

Who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free.

146:1-2 This strophe (Ps. 146:1-7) starts with a double “hallelujah” (BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERATIVES). This is followed by two personal commitments of the psalmist.

1. I will praise – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* COHORTATIVE

2. I will sing praises – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* COHORTATIVE)

Praise of YHWH characterizes Psalms 146-150. The Psalter closes on this affirmation.

146:1 “soul” This is the term *nephesh* (BDB 659), which denoted the entire person (cf. Ps. 103:1). See notes online at Gen. 35:18.

146:2 Notice the parallel between

1. while I live – BDB 313

2. while I have my being – BDB 728

These reflect the Hebrew concept that there is no praise of God after death (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17; Ps. 63:4; 104:33; Isa. 38:18). The OT has a rudimentary theology of life after death. New Testament progressive revelation supplements this theology. See Special Topic: *Sheol*.

146:3 YHWH is praised because with Him, and Him alone, is salvation/deliverance (BDB 448), certainly not in frail, fallen mankind (MT, “a son of man”; LXX, “sons of men”; cf. Psalm 60:11; 108:12). The SINGULAR stands for all humans, as in Ps. 118:8.

146:4 This verse picks up the thought of Ps. 146:2. At death the body returns to dust (cf. Gen. 3:19; Job 34:15; Ps. 104:29; Eccl. 12:7). The spirit (*ruah*, BDB 924) or life force goes to *Sheol*.

▣ **“his thoughts”** This word (BDB 799) occurs only here in the OT and is translated by most modern translations as “plans/designs.”

146:5 The Psalm praises YHWH but also notes how “blessed” (BDB 80) are the faithful followers. Psalm 146:6-7 and 8-9 list the power and mercy of the God of Jacob.

▣ **“help”** This NOUN (BDB 740 I) is often associated with deliverance and protection (cf. Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:7,26; Ps. 33:20; 70:5; 115:9,10,11).

▣ **“hope”** The NOUN (BDB 960 II) can be translated

1. wait – Ps. 104:27; 145:15
2. hope – Ps. 119:166, Isa. 38:18

146:6-7 There is a series of *Qal* PARTICIPLES that describe YHWH

1. as Creator (i.e., *Elohim*)
 - a. made heaven, earth, sea, cf. Ps. 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; Isa. 37:16; Jer. 32:17
 - b. created all that is in them
 - c. this is a summary statement related to this planet
2. as covenant God (i.e., YHWH)
 - a. keeps faith/trust (see Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT)
 - b. executes justice for the oppressed (the NEB and REB see “forever,” לעולם, of Ps. 146:6c as “the oppressed,” לעוֹלָם, UBS Text Project, p. 440)
 - c. gives food to the hungry, cf. Ps. 145:15
 - d. sets the prisoners free, cf. Ps. 68:6; 102:20; 107:10,14; Isa. 61:1
 - (1) metaphor of problems
 - (2) slavery for debts
 - (3) exiles

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 146:8-10

⁸The LORD opens *the eyes* of the blind;
The LORD raises up those who are bowed down;
The LORD loves the righteous;
⁹The LORD protects the strangers;
He supports the fatherless and the widow,
But He thwarts the way of the wicked.
¹⁰The LORD will reign forever,
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD!

146:8-9 Like Ps. 146:6-7, these verses describe the God who acts, so different from the lifeless idols (see Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God).

1. opens blind eyes – BDB 824, KB 959, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
2. raises the bowed down – BDB 279, KB 279, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Ps. 145:14 (these are the only usages of the VERB in the OT)
3. loves the righteous – BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Ps. 11:7; 33:5
4. protects the stranger – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* PARTICIPLE (for a good brief article see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, pp. 74-76)
5. supports the orphan and the widow – BDB 728, KB 795, *Piel* IMPERFECT
6. thwarts the way of the wicked – BDB 736, KB 804, *Piel* IMPERFECT

This list is a composite of God’s acts from Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and the Prophets.

Number 6 is literally “to be bent” (BDB 736) or “to be crooked.” This may be a play on the word “righteous” of Ps. 146:8c, which means “to be straight” (see Special Topic: Righteousness). All words for sin are a play on this metaphor for God’s character, in light of which all humans are crooked.

146:10 This speaks of the sovereignty of the God of Israel and His plans (cf. Exod. 15:18; Ps. 10:16; 29:10).

Just a theological note, how will YHWH reign and where and over who? Please look at Special Topic: Why Do OT Covenant Promises Seem So Different from NT Covenant Promises.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What did the Israelites expect after death (Ps. 146:2,4)?
2. Does Ps. 146:6 speak of the universe or this planet?
3. How is the depiction of the character and acts of God related to ANE thought about how a king should act?
4. Will YHWH reign in/from Zion or is His reign universal? How has the NT changed this OT concept?

PSALM 147

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Praise for Jerusalem's Restoration and Prosperity <u>No MT Intro</u>	Praise to God for His Word and Providence	Hymn Praising God for His Universal Power and Providential Care	In Praise of God the Almighty	Hymn to the All-Powerful
147:1-6	147:1 147:2-6	147:1-6	147:1-3 147:4-6	147:1-4 147:5-6
147:7-11	147:7-9 147:10-11	147:7-11	147:7-9 147:10-11	147:7-9 147:10-11
147:12-20	147:12-14 147:15-18 147:19-20c 147:20d	147:12-20	147:12-14 147:15-18 147:19-20b 147:20c	147:12 147:13-14 147:15-16 147:17-18 147:19-20b

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 147:1-6

¹Praise the LORD!

For it is good to sing praises to our God;

For it is pleasant *and* praise is becoming.

²The LORD builds up Jerusalem;

He gathers the outcasts of Israel.

³He heals the brokenhearted

And binds up their wounds.

⁴He counts the number of the stars;

He gives names to all of them.

⁵Great is our Lord and abundant in strength;

His understanding is infinite.

⁶The LORD supports the afflicted;

He brings down the wicked to the ground.

147:1-6 This first strophe (Ps. 147:1-6), like Psalm 146, lists several characteristics of God which can be ascertained by His acts (this Psalm is post-exilic).

1. for Israel
 - a. builds up Jerusalem
 - b. gathers her outcasts (i.e., exiles, cf. Isa. 11:12; Ezek. 39:28)
2. for the needy
 - a. heals the broken hearted (possibly refers to repentant Israel in exile, cf. Ps. 51:17,18)
 - b. supports the afflicted (i.e., often used of faithful followers)
 - c. brings down the wicked
 - (1) foreign nations
 - (2) unfaithful covenant partners
3. against paganism (i.e., astral idolatry)
 - a. counts the number of stars (Gen. 1:16; Isa. 40:26, i.e., not gods, cf. Ps. 8:3)
 - b. calls them by name (i.e., controls them)
 - c. YHWH is abundant in strength (cf. Isa. 40:26e)
 - d. YHWH has infinite understanding (BDB 108, cf. Isa. 40:28)

147:1

NASB “becoming”

NKJV “beautiful”

TEV, REB “fitting”

JPSOA “glorious”

This ADJECTIVE (BDB 610) can mean

1. beautiful – Sol. 1:5; 2:14; 4:3; 6:4
2. fitting, appropriate when used of praise to God – Ps. 33:1; 93:5; Pro. 17:7

147:4b “He gives names to all of them” The naming of something demonstrates authority over it (cf. Gen. 2:18-20).

147:6 “to the ground” This can be understood in several ways.

1. the defeated enemy bowing to the ground
2. a circumlocution for death/*Sheol*

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 147:7-11

⁷**Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
Sing praises to our God on the lyre,**
⁸**Who covers the heavens with clouds,
Who provides rain for the earth,
Who makes grass to grow on the mountains.**
⁹**He gives to the beast its food,
And to the young ravens which cry.**
¹⁰**He does not delight in the strength of the horse;
He does not take pleasure in the legs of a man.**
¹¹**The LORD favors those who fear Him,
Those who wait for His lovingkindness.**

147:7-11 As the first strophe began with “praise” (*Piel* IMPERATIVE), this one (Ps. 147:7-11) begins with “singing.”

1. sing – BDB 777, KB 854, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. sing praises – BDB 274, KB 273, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

The object of this singing is YHWH and His great acts.

1. as sustainer of creation and the normal cycles of nature (cf. Ps. 104:10-17)
 - a. clouds
 - b. rain
 - c. plant growth
 - d. food for animals (cf. Ps. 104:27b; 136:25)
2. who He does not trust and who He does
 - a. negative (cf. Ps. 33:16-17)
 - (1) military power (i.e., the horse)
 - (2) strength of men (lit. legs)
 - b. positive
 - (1) those who fear (see Special Topic: Fear [OT]) Him
 - (2) those who wait on His lovingkindness (see Special Topic: Lovingkindness [*hesed*])

147:9b The UBS Text Project (p. 1176) mentions a cultural proverb which asserted that ravens do not feed their young well (cf. Job 38:41), but here it is asserted that the compassionate provider God does!

It may also be significant that the raven (BDB 788) was considered an unclean bird (cf. Lev. 11:15) but God still cares for them!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 147:12-20

¹²**Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem!
Praise your God, O Zion!**
¹³**For He has strengthened the bars of your gates;
He has blessed your sons within you.**
¹⁴**He makes peace in your borders;
He satisfies you with the finest of the wheat.**
¹⁵**He sends forth His command to the earth;**

His word runs very swiftly.

¹⁶He gives snow like wool;

He scatters the frost like ashes.

¹⁷He casts forth His ice as fragments;

Who can stand before His cold?

¹⁸He sends forth His word and melts them;

He causes His wind to blow and the waters to flow.

¹⁹He declares His words to Jacob,

His statutes and His ordinances to Israel.

²⁰He has not dealt thus with any nation;

And as for His ordinances, they have not known them.

Praise the LORD!

147:12-20 This third strophe (Ps. 147:12-20) also starts off with IMPERATIVES of praise.

1. praise – BDB 986, KB 1387, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
2. praise – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

He is worthy of praise because of His covenant fidelity (esp. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30) towards Israel (i.e., Jerusalem. . .Zion).

1. strengthens the fortifications of Jerusalem (i.e., gate bars)
2. blesses
 - a. the children of the city (i.e., health, their number)
 - b. the people inside the city (TEV)
3. brings peace to the land
4. provides a good crop
5. controls the weather (Ps. 147:16-18) so as to sustain agricultural abundance (i.e., covenant promises, cf. Ps. 147:19)
6. His special relationship (i.e., revelation) to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob

147:14b “the finest of wheat” This is a metaphor of agricultural abundance (cf. Ps. 81:16) because grain was such a staple of the ANE diet.

147:15 God’s word is personified as running rapidly (i.e., going into all creation). In Hebrew thought God’s word was a creative power (cf. Genesis 1). Once given, it would accomplish its purpose (cf. Isa. 45:23; 55:11).

147:19 “words. . .statutes. . .ordinances” See Special Topic: Terms for God’s Revelation.

147:20b “they have not known them” God’s revelation was a special gift. It was meant to be lived out as a witness to the nations. Israel failed in this! See Special Topic: YHWH Eternal Redemptive Plan.

The UBS Text Project rates this phrase as “C” (considerable doubt). It recommends it as over against the NEB, “he does not let them know.” This difference is

1. MT, NASB – בל - ידעום
2. NEB, REB – בל - ידיעם

147:20c The Psalm closes as it began—“Hallelujah”!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How do you explain Ps. 145:6,8-13 focusing on “all men” and Psalm 147 focusing on Israel (esp. Ps. 147:19-20)?
2. Why is Ps. 147:4 so theologically significant in an ANE setting?
3. How is Ps. 147:7-9 related to Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30?
4. God’s sustaining providence described in Ps. 147:16-18 provides nature with consistent patterns. How did this affect the development of the “scientific method” in western culture?
5. Does Ps. 147:20 imply that God does not share Himself or His revelation with Gentiles?

PSALM 148

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Whole Creation Invoked to Praise the LORD <u>No MT Intro</u>	Praise to the LORD from Creation	Hymn Calling Upon All Created Things to praise the LORD	A Call for the Universe to Praise God	Cosmic Hymn of Praise
148:1-6	148:1a 148:1b-4	148:1-2 148:3-4	148:1a 148:1b-2 148:3-4	148:1-2 148:3-4
	148:5-6	148:5-6	148:5-6	148:5-6
148:7-12	148:7-12	148:7-8 148:9-10 148:11-12	148:7-8 148:9-10 148:11-12	148:7-8 148:9-10 148:11-12
148:13-14	148:13-14d 148:14e	148:13-14	148:13-14c 148:14d	148:13-14

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FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Remember the Bible is an earth-oriented book. This planet was the focus of God preparing a special place to fellowship with His highest creation (i.e., made in His image and likeness, cf. Gen. 1:26-27).
- B. All of the different levels of creation
 1. celestial (i.e., "from the heavens," Ps. 148:1b)

2. earthly (i.e., “from the earth,” Ps. 148:7a)
 3. covenant people
- are called on to praise YHWH, the Creator and Sustainer of all life on this planet and related to this planet (i.e., angels).

C. This is the choir of heaven and earth, animate and inanimate!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 148:1-6

¹Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
Praise Him in the heights!
²Praise Him, all His angels;
Praise Him, all His hosts!
³Praise Him, sun and moon;
Praise Him, all stars of light!
⁴Praise Him, highest heavens,
And the waters that are above the heavens!
⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For He commanded and they were created.
⁶He has also established them forever and ever;
He has made a decree which will not pass away.

148:1-6 The VERB “praise” (BDB 237, KB 248) dominates this Psalm. Each of the three strophes begins with it. Psalm 148:1-4 contains all *Piel* IMPERATIVES, as does Ps. 148:7,14.

This first strophe focuses on “above the earth” things (cf. Ps. 103:19-22).

1. “from the heavens” (BDB 1029) – this refers to the atmosphere above the earth; see Special Topic: Heaven, also note Ps. 69:34; 96:11; Isa. 44:23; 49:13
2. “in the heights” (BDB 928) – this is parallel to “heavens”
3. “all His angels” (BDB 521) – this refers to the conscious servants of God (cf. Ps. 103:20); they are not said to be created in any specific OT text, but their inclusion here strongly suggests that, Col. 1:16 also strongly assumes this truth
 There are three Special Topics related to angels:
 - a. Special Topic: The Angel of the Lord
 - b. Special Topic: Angels and Demons
 - c. Special Topic: Angelic Levels in Paul’s Writings
4. “all His hosts” (BDB 838) – this term is used in two senses
 - a. in military contexts it refers to a heavenly army of angels
 - b. in an astral worship context it refers to the lights in the sky (i.e., sun, moon, stars, comets) which were thought to be gods who affected human life; notice “a” could relate to Ps. 148:2a or “b” could relate to Ps. 148:3 (cf. Ps. 103:21)
5. “sun and moon” – these are the greater lights of Gen. 1:14-16; both were worshiped in the ANE; see Special Topic: Moon Worship
6. “all stars of light” – see note at Ps. 147:4
7. “highest heaven” – see Special Topic: The Heavens and the Third Heaven

8. “the waters that are above the heavens” – this alludes to Gen. 1:6-8; God controls the ancient waters; see Special Topic: Waters

148:5a “Let them praise” This is a *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. It would denote a call to prayer/praise to the Creator (cf. Ps. 148:5b-6).

The “name” stands for YHWH Himself. See Special Topic: “The Name” of YHWH.

148:5b This alludes to creation by the spoken word of Genesis 1 (cf. Ps. 33:6,9; Heb. 11:3).

148:6 This is a hyperbolic statement of the permanency of this planet and its seasons (cf. Jer. 31:35-36; 33:20,25). We know from 2 Pet. 3:7,10-12 that the polluted, fallen creation shall be cleansed. From science, moderns know that we live in a violent, unstable universe. This solar system is not eternal. These are faith statements of God’s eternity (cf. Ps. 93:1; 96:10d) and His promises that those who know Him will be with Him!

▣ **“forever and ever”** See Special Topic: Forever (‘*olam*).



NASB, NKJV “a decree which will not pass away”

NRSV “he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed”

NJB “by an unchanging decree”

This phrase can refer to

1. God’s decree/plans (cf. Ps. 33:11)
2. God’s fixed boundaries of the land/sea/rivers (cf. Job 38:8-11; Ps. 104:9; Jer. 5:22)

The VERB “pass over,” “pass through,” “pass on,” “pass away” (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* IMPERFECT) obviously has a wide semantic field which can support #1 or #2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 148:7-12

- ⁷Praise the LORD from the earth,
Sea monsters and all deeps;
⁸Fire and hail, snow and clouds;
Stormy wind, fulfilling His word;
⁹Mountains and all hills;
Fruit trees and all cedars;
¹⁰Beasts and all cattle;
Creeping things and winged fowl;
¹¹Kings of the earth and all peoples;
Princes and all judges of the earth;
¹²Both young men and virgins;
Old men and children.

148:7-12 This strophe focuses on the praise (one VERB covers Ps. 148:7-12, each line assumes “praise”) of living things on this planet.

1. “sea monsters” (BDB 1072) – this is used in several senses
 - a. snake – Exod. 7:9,10,12; Deut. 32:33; Ps. 91:13
 - b. dragon – Jer. 51:34 (also note name of the gate in Neh. 2:13)

- c. sea monsters – see online notes at Gen. 1:21; Isa. 27:1
- 2. “all deeps” (BDB 1062) – this is used in several senses
 - a. subterranean waters (salt), cf. Gen. 7:11; 8:2; Job 28:4; 38:16; Ps. 33:7; 107:23-26; 135:6; Isa. 51:10; Amos 7:4
 - b. fresh water – usually in reference to crossing of the Red Sea, cf. Exod. 15:5,8; Ps. 77:17; 78:15; 106:9; Isa. 63:13
 - c. primeval waters – Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:6-7; Pr. 8:27, see Special Topic: Waters (water is never said to be spoken into existence in Genesis 1)
 - d. *Sheol* – Ps. 71:20 (see Special Topic: *Sheol*)
- 3. Psalm 148:7-8 lists weather and topological features of the earth
- 4. Psalm 148:10 covers all created animal life
- 5. Psalm 148:11-12 lists human beings of all social levels and ages

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 148:13-14

¹³**Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For His name alone is exalted;
His glory is above earth and heaven.**
¹⁴**And He has lifted up a horn for His people,
Praise for all His godly ones;
Even for the sons of Israel, a people near to Him.
Praise the LORD!**

148:13-14 The strophe starts like Ps. 148:5, with a *Piel* IMPERFECT of “praise” used in a JUSSIVE sense. It focuses on the praise due YHWH from His covenant people.

148:13 “His name alone is exalted” This is

- 1. a literary expression of monotheism (see Special Topic: Monotheism)
- 2. a way to contrast YHWH with mankind (cf. Isa. 2:11,17)

▣ **“glory”** See Special Topic: Glory (*kabod*, OT).

148:14 “horn” The Hebrews viewed animal horns (esp. “ox,” cf. Deut. 33:17; Ps. 92:10) as an expression of power (cf. Ps. 18:2).

- 1. the altars in the temple had horns
- 2. a person’s life was characterized as a “horn” to be
 - a. lifted up (cf. 1 Sam. 2:1; Ps. 89:17,24; 92:10; 112:9)
 - b. put in dust (cf. Job 16:15)
 - c. cut off (cf. Ps. 75:10)

148:14 “all His godly ones” See notes at Ps. 16:10 and 145:10 online.

Here the phrase is parallel to “His people.” They are further characterized as

- 1. sons of Israel
- 2. a people near to Him – this at first referred to priests/Levites who served in the temple but later came to be used of all covenant people who worship YHWH

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1. How is Ps. 148:1-6 related to Ps. 148:7-12?
2. Define “hosts” of Ps. 148:2b. Does it relate to Ps. 148:2a or 149:3?
3. How does one reconcile Ps. 148:6 with 2 Pet. 3:7,10-12?
4. Define “sea monsters” of Ps. 148:7b.
5. Does Ps. 148:14 refer to “praise” to Israel or to YHWH?

PSALM 149

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Israel Invoked to Praise the LORD <u>No MT Intro</u>	Praise to the God for His Salvation and Judgment	Hymn to Accompany a Festival Dance	A Hymn of Praise	Songs of Triumph
149:1-4	149:1a 149:1b-c 149:2-4	149:1-9	149:1a 149:1b-9b	149:1a 149:1b-3 149:4-6
149:5-9	149:5-9b 149:9c		149:9c	149:7-9b

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is a Psalm written to commemorate and rejoice over a military victory by Israel over a Gentile foe (cf. Ps. 149:6b-9a).
- B. Israel is honored as YHWH's special people (Psalm 112).
 1. the congregation of the godly ones (lit. "the assembly of the faithful") – BDB 874 CONSTRUCT BDB 339, Ps. 149:1
 2. YHWH is their
 - a. Maker (BDB 793 I, KB 889, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Ps. 149:2
 - b. King (BDB 572 I), Ps. 149:2

3. His people. . .the afflicted ones, Ps. 149:4
4. the godly ones (lit. “the faithful”), Ps. 149:5
5. “His godly ones” (lit. “faithful ones”), Ps. 149:9

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 149:1-4

¹**Praise the LORD!**

Sing to the LORD a new song,

And His praise in the congregation of the godly ones.

²**Let Israel be glad in his Maker;**

Let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King.

³**Let them praise His name with dancing;**

Let them sing praises to Him with timbrel and lyre.

⁴**For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;**

He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation.

149:1-4 The strophe starts off with two parallel *Piel* IMPERATIVES.

1. praise
2. sing

These are followed by a series of four IMPERFECTS used as JUSSIVES.

1. let Israel be glad
2. let Zion rejoice
3. let them praise His name
4. let them sing praises to Him

The psalmist prays that Israel will respond appropriately to their military victory by recognizing it is from YHWH and not themselves.

149:1 “a new song” This would represent a cultural way to commemorate an event (compare Exod. 15:1-18,21; Jdgs. 5:1-13; 1 Sam. 18:6; Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; Isa. 42:10).

▣ **“congregation”** This is *Qahal* (BDB 874), which in the LXX, was translated *ekklesia*. See Special Topic: Church (*ekklesia*).

▣ **“the godly ones”** This is the same word used in Ps. 148:14, which comes from *hesed* (BDB 339). See note at Ps. 16:10 online.

149:2 “Maker” This (BDB 793 I) does not refer to creation but to the call of Abraham and the promise to his descendants, which was fully ratified on Mt. Sinai (cf. Exodus 19-20). It is also alluded to in Ps. 95:6; 100:3; Isa. 17:7). YHWH was uniquely their Maker, Savior, and Covenant Deity!

▣ **“their King”** This theological understanding goes back to 1 Sam. 8:7, cf. Ps. 47:6; 89:18. The King of God’s people was meant to be His earthly representative, His Undershepherd.

▣ **“Zion”** See Special Topic: Zion.

149:3 “dancing” This implies a special worship event celebrating

1. a military victory (cf. Exod. 15:20; Jdgs. 11:34; 1 Sam. 18:6)
2. a worship event (cf. 2 Sam. 6:5; Ps. 150:4)
3. a restoration (cf. Ps. 30:11; in connection with this, “bed” [BDB 1012] may refer to a place sick people lie, cf. Exod. 21:18; Job 33:19)

149:4 “the afflicted ones” Although this root (BDB 776) can refer to the poor and needy, it often was used of God’s persecuted people.

▣ **“salvation”** See Special Topic: Salvation (OT).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 149:5-9

⁵Let the godly ones exult in glory;
Let them sing for joy on their beds.
⁶Let the high praises of God *be* in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
⁷To execute vengeance on the nations
And punishment on the peoples,
⁸To bind their kings with chains
And their nobles with fetters of iron,
⁹To execute on them the judgment written;
This is an honor for all His godly ones.
Praise the LORD!

149:5-9 This strophe has three prayer requests using IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense.

1. exult
2. sing for joy
3. an assumed “to be” VERB in Ps. 149:6a

This strophe combines a prayer for

1. God’s people to rejoice
2. God’s enemies to be judged

149:5 “the godly ones” This is from the root *hesed* (BDB 339, see Special Topic: Lovingkindness [*hesed*]). It is used often and denotes someone faithful to the covenant.

The other term used for faithful followers is from the root *kadosh* (BDB 872, see Special Topic: Holy), which denotes one separated for YHWH’s service.

These “godly ones” are not sinless but have a faith, obedient, and repentant relationship with YHWH.

▣ **“glory”** This Hebrew root (BDB 458, see Special Topic: Glory [*kabod*]) is difficult to define. It has a wide semantic field. AB (p. 357) thinks it is a title for YHWH, “their Glorious One.”

▣ **“sing for joy on their beds”** This is a surprising place to “exult. . .sing.” This must be figurative language of a person with a joyful, peaceful heart that sleeps well! This is the opposite of Ps. 6:7.

It is surely possible (Tyndale, *OT Commentary Series*, vol. 16, Psalm, p. 527) that “couch” refers to reclining at a meal and, therefore, singing and rejoicing at a victory banquet!

149:6 The peaceful attitude of Ps. 149:5 is matched with military preparedness. There is peace because YHWH has given His covenant people victory over the surrounding nations (cf. Ps. 149:7-8).

▣ **“high praises”** This CONSTRUCT (BDB 928, KB 1206 and BDB 42) occurs only here and possibly Ps. 66:17.

▣ **“sword in their hand”** This phrase could refer to

1. literary imagery of a past victory
2. a symbolic dance by priests
3. preparation for a coming battle

149:7 Some see this verse in an eschatological setting but it could fit any victory in Israel’s history over the surrounding nations of the ANE.

▣ **“vengeance”** For a good brief discussion of this theological concept in the OT, see NIDOTTE, vol. 4, pp. 1140-1149. If YHWH does not bring justice in this life, there must be an afterlife.

149:9a “the judgment written” This must refer to

1. “Holy War” promises, as in the Exodus and Conquest
2. results of the “cursing and blessing” promises of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30
3. an allusion to the Prophetic sections on the judgment of the nations (i.e., Jeremiah 46-51)
4. a good example of this kind of “peace promise” is Ezek. 28:26; 34:25-28; 38:8

149:9b The victory brought by YHWH will bring honor to the covenant people (cf. Psalm 1121).

149:9c Psalms 146-150 all begin and end with “Hallelujah,” a *Piel* IMPERATIVE of “praise,” or an abbreviation of YHWH.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. On what occasions were “a new song” sung?
2. Does Ps. 149:2a refer to Genesis 1 or Genesis 12?
3. Is the Psalm about a past military victory or a future one?
4. Does the Bible as a whole emphasize the judgment of the nations or the inclusion of the nations?
5. Who are the godly ones in Ps. 149:1,5,9?

PSALM 150

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Psalm of Praise <u>No MT Intro</u>	Let All Things Praise the LORD	Doxology Marking the End of the Psalter	Praise the LORD	Final Chorus of Praise
150:1-2	150:1a 150:1b-c 150:2	150:1-2	150:1a 150:1b-2	150:1a 150:1b-2
150:3-6	150:3-5 150:6a 150:6b	150:3-6	150:3-6b 150:6c	150:3-6a 150:6b

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 150:1-2

¹Praise the LORD!

Praise God in His sanctuary;

Praise Him in His mighty expanse.

²Praise Him for His mighty deeds;

Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.

150:1-6 The only VERB is “praise” (BDB 237, B 248) used thirteen times.

1. twelve *Piel* IMPERATIVES (in Psalm 146-150, thirty-three times)
2. one *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (cf. Ps. 150:6a)

Notice the PREPOSITIONS.

1. in a place
 - a. in His sanctuary
 - b. in His mighty expanse
2. because
 - a. His mighty deeds
 - b. His excellent greatness
3. with musical instruments (what type is not always clear)
 - a. trumpet (BDB 1051)
 - b. harp (BDB 490, cf. 2 Sam. 6:5)
 - c. lyre (BDB 614, cf. 2 Sam. 6:5)
 - d. timbrel (BDB 1074)
 - e. stringed instruments (BDB 577 I)
 - f. pipe (BDB 721, NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 334)
 - g. cymbals (BDB 852, cf. 2 Sam. 6:5)
4. with dancing, Ps. 150:4
5. with breath, Ps. 150:6

150:1 This verse may be a literary way of paralleling Ps. 150:6a.

The “sanctuary” (i.e., temple or on earth, cf. Ps. 148:7-12; the LXX has “among His saints”) would denote earth and the “expanse” (the celestial realm, cf. Ps. 148:1-4).

It is possible that both Ps. 150:1b and 1c refer to YHWH’s (*El* in Ps. 150:1b) abode (cf. Ps. 11:4).

150:2 “His mighty deeds” See notes on Ps. 145:4,5,6,7,9,12.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 150:3-6

- ³Praise Him with trumpet sound;
Praise Him with harp and lyre.**
- ⁴Praise Him with timbrel and dancing;
Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe.**
- ⁵Praise Him with loud cymbals;
Praise Him with resounding cymbals.**
- ⁶Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD!**

150:3 “trumpet” These are blown by priests. See Special Topic: Horns Used by Israel.

▣ **“harp and lyre”** These were instruments used by the Levites in temple worship (cf. 1 Chr. 15:16; 2 Chr. 29:25; Neh. 12:27).

150:6a What a beautiful way to speak of animate creation (human and animal) praising the Creator (cf. Ps. 103:19-22; 145:21; 148:7-12).

APPENDIX ONE – DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Spirit; truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life, and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love."